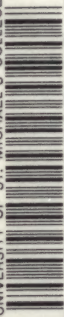


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The Spiritual Classics
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"Be comforted, be comforted,
my People, saith your God"

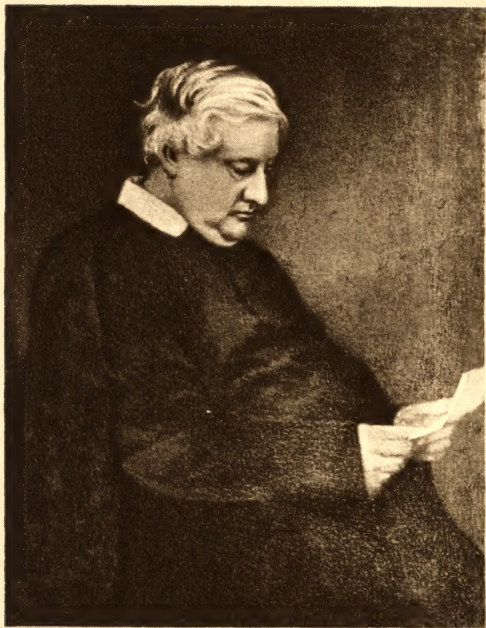
THE COMPILER'S DEDICATION

To A. M.

*And to all others whose Growth in
Holiness is associated with Father
Faber and with the London
Oratory, this selection
from his Writings
is inscribed.*



SEP - 3 1852



F. W. Faber

THE SPIRIT OF FATHER FABER APOSTLE OF LONDON

*WITH A PREFACE BY
WILFRID MEYNELL*



BENZIGER BROTHERS

New York, Cincinnati, Chicago

1914

BABYLON DON

HOW one comes to love this great huge London, when God has thrown us into it as our vineyard ! The monster—it looks so unmanageable, and it is positively so awfully wicked, so hopelessly magnificent, so heretically wise and proud after its own fashion. Yet after a fashion it is good also. Such a multitudinous remnant who have never bowed the knee to Baal, such numbers seeking their way to the light, such hearts Grace touched, so much secret holiness, such supernatural lives, such loyalty, mercy, sacrifice, sweetness, greatness. St. Vincent Ferrer preached in its streets, and Fr. Colombière in its mews. Do not keep down what is good in it. Help people to be saints. Not all who ask for help really wish it, when it comes to be painful. But some do. Raise ten souls to detachment from creatures, and to close union with God, and what will happen to this monster city ? Who can tell ? Monster as it is, it is not altogether unamiable. It means well often, even when it is cruel. Well-meaning persons are unavoidably cruel. Yet it is often as helpless and as deserving of compassion as it is of wrath and malediction. Poor Babylon ! would she might have a blessing from her unknown God, and that Grace might find its way even into her Areopagus !—F. W. FABER.

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FREDERICK WILFRID FABER

FATHER Faber (who, on his death-bed asked for *Dombey*), is himself, in some sort, a spiritual Dickens. Of all devotional writers, of the nineteenth century and in England, Faber is the most vital; and, if he is the most heavenly, he is also the most human. Even the critic who lays a detecting finger on a page of false sentiment presently feels the throb of a living sympathy beneath the letters. Indeed, lacking such sympathy, Dickens and Faber could not have achieved their truth to type—to such various types. Fecundity of fancy and of expression they had in common; and each, in his writing wore out, not his pen only, but the fibres of his feeling heart.

“The child of his mother’s prayers” was born in the June of 1814, at the Yorkshire vicarage of Calverley, and went duly to Shrewsbury, to Harrow, and to Oxford. His link—not always a very fast one—with Newman began in those eager days. At first he was drawn to the Oxford Movement, yet also repelled by it; but after his ordination the reflections of a quiet country rectory developed all that was Catholic in him. He was received into the Roman Church in the November of 1845. When Newman

PREFACE

established the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Birmingham, Faber became the head of the London Community, founding in King William Street, and then in Brompton, the Oratory which yet enshrines his spirit. Son of St. Philip, Apostle of Rome, he there, by voice and pen, became, what he must remain, the APOSTLE OF LONDON.

Of the many books he wrote, the present volume preserves the essence. In so vast a bulk of writing as was his may be found much that is superfluous, many repetitions, some contradictions. But there is one animating spirit throughout, and that is Love. Love is all his motive power. There is nothing mechanical about his piety. It is all feeling. Men are his fellows. He invites where others drive, encourages where it is easier to scold. He says "Come" rather than "Go"; and it is just because he himself is generous that he will always receive his due. He lived to ease souls; and, in dying, promised those about him that he would pray for them that they might have "easy deaths." That is a Grace which indeed his writings, by their influence on character, have secured for myriads who never saw his face; and it is a Grace which, he in Heaven helping, this volume shall perpetuate and extend.

W. M.

London, 1914.



FOREWORDS FROM FABER

IHAVE done no more than try to harmonise the ancient and modern spirituality of the Church, with somewhat perhaps of a propensity to the first, and to put it before English Catholics in an English shape, translated into native thought and feeling, as well as language.

THE book is but one half the work. The interior spirit of the reader is the other and the better half.

WE wish to explain, or to state rather than to explain, the first elements of all practical religion, the A B C of devotion. We want to write a primer of piety, and to do so in the plainest, easiest and most unadorned style. The commonplaces are not so well known as they should be. Their very commonness leads men to overlook them. So, dear readers, let us begin, as little children, at the very beginning.

OURSELVES

DEVOUT people formed upon the three instincts for the glory of God, the interests of Jesus, and the welfare of souls, abound in good times, and seem to be to the Church what the middle classes are to the prosperity of the state—not its heroes, but its life, strength, muscle and independence. They are the growth of quiet times. Martyrs can be, and will be, made out of them by scores, when troubles come. But Saints, the spiritual creations of an interior life, belong to another order of things. It is plain, then, that in uneventful times it is our chief work to increase the middle class of the Faithful ; otherwise we shall be such dry and uninteresting Christians, that we shall never convert those outside the fold, and, what is even of more importance, we shall have nobody to love our multitudinous poor, or to take any generous, persevering pains about them.

ii

IT is equally obvious that it is the devil's policy to lessen the number of this class ; and this he does in two ways especially—first, by giving devotion a bad

OURSELVES

name, inspiring men to call it romantic, enthusiastic, pretty, youthful, the fervour of converts, fanciful, novel, unpractical, and the like ; and secondly, by leading people to aim too high, to attempt too much, to affect mystical books, to run after miracles and portents, to make rash vows, and to tempt God by burdening themselves with a multiplicity of prayers ; and then, when their wax wings are melted off, in weariness and disgust, they sink down to the merest observance of precepts, and, not seldom, even lower still.

iii

IT was mainly the middle class of the faithful St. Philip set himself to multiply in Rome, and it is substantially the chief work he left his sons to do. If then you want to be a Saint, like to one of the canonised, this chapter is not for you. I should never have dreamed of writing it for you. You want to know secret things which it does not contain. He that has climbed the rocks can alone tell you the secrets of the rough ascent. This is a map of the Easy Ways of Divine Love, higher than the plains, and above their dust, yet not so high as to be beyond the region of sweet flowers and shady trees, and the coolness of bubbling springs.

OURSELVES

iv

YOU must not suppose that I hold cheap the practices of mortification, whether outward or inward, or that I think affective love renders effective love unnecessary, or even that I believe interior mortification can dispense from the obligation of bodily penances and discomforts, in the case of those who are aiming at perfection. My little book is not a summa of ascetical theology. But because we cannot rise high, there is no need surely to sink low. Some severe spiritualists speak as if affective love were little better than a delusion, or at best a mere service of hot feelings. But surely this is hasty, peremptory, unkind, not like the Church or God. I grant we must not stop there, that we must go on to mortify our inordinate passions, and work and suffer. Yet surely merely affective love is good as far as it goes ; neither can it be with Catholics nothing more than a worship of feelings ; for I have shown all along, and Theology most amply bears me out, that the practices of it may be made most solid, nay, almost inevitably are so. Indeed it may be doubted if any love rests in being merely affective ; and moreover affective love is the way to effective. I know there are many people who have made up their minds not to be Saints. Well, if God was

OURSELVES

angry with them, and counted their pusillanimity as sin, if Jesus turned away from them and left them out of His reckoning, we need take no pains for them. But He does not do so ; and therefore we may well affectionately ask them to think, if they will not be Saints, whether they will not love our dearest Lord as far as Calvary, without committing themselves to the crucifixion. This will come home to us most feelingly when our poor ashamed hearts tell us that we ourselves are at least among the well-intentioned faint-hearted cowards of the army of our generous and unselfish Lord.

V

I AM sure many of you are not contented with yourselves. You want to love God more, and to make more of Jesus. You want to get out of your cold, dry, unhand-some way with Him. You would fain have more liberty of spirit, and feel your affections more at large in religion, and be unaffectedly more familiar with the instincts and interests of Heaven. You see that the service of love has common sense on its side, that these half-and-half measures with God make you neither happy nor holy ; and, moreover, something in your heart is drawing you closer to God, and winning you to better things. Now look

what these acts of Praise and Desire will do for you. They will take the world out of your hearts, and make its pleasures look small and dull to you. They will draw you into quite a different set of ideas and associations, of affections and sympathies. They will make the practice of God's presence as easy to you as it will be delightful. They will settle a host of cases of conscience for you, by raising you at once into a clearer atmosphere, where the doubts and difficulties in question do not exist. They will make idleness, frivolity and dissipation intolerable to you, because of the change which they will bring about in your tastes.

vi

BEAUTIFUL Angels were dull to St. Mary Magdalene ; for she was seeking Jesus that Easter morning. What were their celestial faces and their dazzling raiment to her ? They had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him. The gardener, too, as St. Francis sweetly says, reminded her only of flowers, while her head was full of nails, and thorns and crosses ; yet, as he has come in her way, she will out with her one thought, " Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." The Three Kings hurried through Jerusalem ; the Court only made

them fret ; they could rest nowhere but with their star at the crib of Jesus in the cave of Bethlehem. The spouse met the watchmen of the city, and her heart also was on her lips, " Have you seen Him whom my soul loveth ? "

vii

DO these acts of Praise and Desire make new men of us. We are all for Heaven. Death even changes its aspect. All things seem easy which are for Jesus, all things welcome which are steps to Him. How differently people feel ! When some one told Father Dominic, the Passionist, whose memory is dear to so many of us, that she feared the Particular Judgement, the tears started into his eyes, and he cried out in his natural way, " O, but how sweet to see for the first time the Sacred Humanity of Jesus ! " This is what Praise and Desire bring us to. We cannot be all we wish on this side the grave ; but we can get on towards it by means of love. We can bring matters to this comfortable simplicity of the Spouse, " My beloved to me, and I to Him, who feedeth among the lilies, till the day break and the shadows retire." Yes, there it is ! till the day break and the shadows retire ; till the day break and the shadows retire ; till the day break and the shadows retire !

“EVERY MAN CAN MEND ONE”

A PERSON who has only recently begun to be thoroughly religious is always very much troubled with an inclination to entertain contemptuous feelings about persons and things. Contempt is the most universal temptation of beginnings. To be a man of one idea is an easy thing, and there is a look of chivalry about it which helps the delusion. When a beginner preaches a crusade against anything, we may always suspect delusion. The spirit of a reformer is the contradictory of the ascetical spirit. A crusade against ourselves may be well enough, though better not even that, until we have learned to subdue ourselves. But to attack other men's faults is to do the devil's work for him ; to do God's work is to attack our own. How different is the wisdom of St. Ignatius. When we practise particular examen of conscience, he would have us choose for the first object of our holy persecution, not the fault which troubles us most or seems of the greatest magnitude, but the one which most annoys our neighbour and gives him disedification. This must be our model.

BEGINNERS offend then by indiscretion, not observing the proprieties of time, place, age, person and circumstances ; by inconsistency, because their conduct must appear such to those who cannot discern in them the internal war which they are waging ; by irritability, far less probably than what the most unkindly critic would forgive if he saw the inward soreness and the weariness of spirit which strife and temptation cause ; by singularity, because it is not easy for a man at once to take up with a new set of principles and always apply them correctly and gracefully to the claims of conflicting duties ; and finally by what is in truth no fault of his, but scandal taken rather than given, because the maxims of the Gospel are so rudely uncongenial with the maxims of the world. We must therefore persuade ourselves that it is very important to our spiritual progress and interior holiness that we should take great pains in our intercourse with others, in order that we may be to them the good odour of Christ. Negligence on this point is the reason why many fail in their attempts after perfection, and while they are looking within for the cause of their ill-success, the true reason of it is to be found all the while in their external conduct.

iii

WE must never do anything in order to edify others, for the express purpose of edifying, which we should not have done except to edify them, and in the doing of which the motive of edification is supreme, if not solitary. Edification must never be our first thought. The evangelical rule is to *let* our light shine before men *that* they may see our good works *and* glorify our Father who is in Heaven. We must take great pains not to disedify ; but it would be very dangerous to take great pains to edify. The two things are very different, although they are often confounded : and you will not unfrequently meet with souls whom self-love has so gnawed and corrupted that their perfect restoration would be little less than a miracle, and the mischief of which is to be traced to a wrong theory of the duty of giving edification. Look out to God, love His glory, hate yourself, and be simple, and you will shine fortunately without knowing it, or thinking of it, with a Christlike splendour wherever you go and whatever you do.

iv

WE must not make unseasonable allusions to religion, or irritate by misplaced solemnity. An inward aspiration or momentary elevation of the soul to God

EVERY MAN CAN MEND ONE

will often do more even for others than the bearing of an open testimony, which principle does not require, and at which offence will almost inevitably be taken. There is a silence which edifies without angering ; though I admit that the practice of it is far from easy. Probably we practise it most successfully when we realise it least, but act out of a heart which is in union with God. A man is annoyed with sacred things when they are unseasonably forced upon him ; and thus even a well-meaning importunity may be a source of sin.

V

WE must bear in mind that there are very few who, by standing or advancement, are in any way called upon to correct their brethren, fewer still who are competent to do it sweetly and wisely, and none whose holiness is not tried to the uttermost by its perfect discharge. While on the other hand those who have rashly assumed to themselves this delicate responsibility have not only sinned themselves by disobedience, disrespect, conceit, bitterness, assumption and exaggeration, but have caused sin in others and made the things of God an offence to them, and a stumbling-block in their road. Hence, before we attempt fraternal correction, we should be quite sure that we have a

EVERY MAN CAN MEND ONE

vocation to it, and we should have made quite sure of it by the judgement of others as well as our own ; and when we are clear about the vocation, we must still preface our correction with prayer and deliberation.

vi

WE must edify others by the sweetness of Jesus. A soft answer turneth away wrath, saith Scripture. Kind and gentle words, such as those of our dear Lord, are an apostolate in themselves. Whereas clever sharp words, such as we have often a strict right to use, are continually doing the devil's work for him, and damaging the souls of others, while they are inflicting no slight wounds upon our own. Our manner, too, must be full of unction, and be of itself a means to attract men to us, and make them love the spirit which animates us. Coldness, absence of interest, an assumption of superiority for some unexpressed reasons, or even an obviousness of condescension, are not unfrequently to be found in pious persons. They have not yet mastered the spirit that is in them so as to use it gracefully, or they do not appreciate the delicacy and universality of its tenderness. They have not a true picture of Jesus in their minds ; and thus they can hardly exhibit Him at all in their outward conduct. Our very looks must be brought into subjection to Grace.

TREASURE OF THE FAITHFUL

PIOUS people sometimes complain of the distractions of worldly occupations ; they think it will be the peculiar business of Heaven to worship God with an unintermitting worship ; in fact, they complain that earth is not Heaven. Yet surely, in this respect at least, it need not be so very unlike it. If ours is a service of love, every one of these so-called distractions is in truth a precious oblation. Every action is Host and Incense and Song and Sacrifice all the day long, if we choose that it should be so ourselves. Now, if we have really at heart God's glory, the interests of Jesus, and the saving of souls, if we would fain be occupied in these things at all hours, we must not neglect to profit by this treasure of our common actions.

ii

IN the secret laboratory of intention is the dross of our commonest actions daily turned into the finest gold ; and we may learn, to our great consolation, of what value these actions become in Our Lord's sight, from His own revelation to St. Gertrude. "As a covetous usurer,"

TREASURE OF THE FAITHFUL

said He, "would not willingly miss the opportunity of making a single penny, much more willingly would I allow one thought or one movement of your little finger made for My sake to perish, without My turning it to My own great praise and your eternal salvation." On another occasion, when she was suffering one night from weakness, she ate some grapes, with the mental intention of refreshing Our Lord in herself. He on His part took this as a royal gift, and said to her, "In this I confess that you have recompensed Me for the bitter potion which I for your sake took upon the cross; for now I suck unspeakable sweetness out of your heart; for with how much greater purity of intention you recreate your body for My glory, with so much the more sweetness do I acknowledge Myself recreated in your soul." Another time our Lord said to her, "My tenderness will accept one step, or one lifting of a straw from the ground, or one word, or one courteous gesture, or one *Requiem æternam* for the dead, or one word for sinners, or even for the just, if there be a pious intention along with it."

JOY IN BELIEVING

WE must not offer to God except of our best. It must be the noblest, as for Him who is noble beyond word or thought, and it must be the noblest as ennobling us who serve Him, and making us more like Himself. It must be the happiest of services. For what is God but infinite beatitude and eternal joy? His life is joy. All that is bright and happy comes from Him. Were it not for Him, there would be no gladness, either in Heaven or on earth. There can be nothing melancholy, nothing gloomy, nothing harsh nothing unwilling in our service of such a Father and Creator. Our worship must be happy in itself, happy in look and in expression, happy in blitheness and in promptitude and in beautiful decorum; and it must also be such a worship, as while it gladdens the tenderness of God and glorifies His paternal fondness, shall also fill our souls with that abounding happiness in Him, which is our main strength in all well-doing and in all holy suffering.

WORKS OF MERCY

THE contemplative life is one thing, and the active life another, and each has its own retinue and appurtenances ; and consistency is the secret of success. Now, except a few, a very few singular vocations, devout people living in the world are called, as living in the world, to an active life. Yet these good people have no Christian active life, and so the prayers and the church-goings will not keep the peace with the parks and the parties, and at last devotion gets the worst of it, and signs away its rights in a base concordat. In other words, dear reader ! I suspect—I only say suspect, for I have no right to anything beyond a suspicion in spiritual science—I suspect that we can have no devout lives in the world without some active tending of the poor ! Visiting the sick, looking after schools, attending hospitals, having to do with penitents and foundlings, emigrants and soup-kitchens—I suspect the secret of perfection in the world, and of perseverance in devotion in the world, lies in these things. To live interior contemplative lives in the world for three hours a day is a glorious thing. But you see, unluckily, it hardly ever lasts. What now if it really be

WORKS OF MERCY

that I am right, and that the reason of the failure is, that to give all your interior life to God, and all your exterior life to the world, is an unlawful division ; and that, if the rich are to be holy, they must either strip themselves of their riches, and hide themselves behind a convent grille, or in the ranks of the priesthood, or they must labour with their own hands for those below them, and make themselves companions of the poor ?

ii

YOU see your Christian life is made up of Mass, Communion, meditation, examen, some little austerities, and the like. But all this is more or less contemplative, so long as it stands by itself. It is all most excellent. But you are called to something additional, to an active Christian life, to the apostolate of the rich, which consists in assiduous and affectionate works of mercy for the poor. When you come from prayer, or from church, you cannot without singularity carry your outward recollection into company, and somehow prayer is like a delicate bloom upon the soul ; the hot air of the world's rooms dissipates it speedily. But if you come from the garret or the hospital, the workhouse or the cellar, you have a charmed atmosphere around you, which is a sort of panoply of

WORKS OF MERCY

paradise, from which the venomous arrows of the world glance off blunted and innocuous. It wears well. It cannot be smiled away, or talked off, or gossiped to pieces, like the exotic bloom of prayer. Everywhere, where the world is, there is danger to the soul ; but the gaiety, the pleasure, or the fashion, can hardly be named, which active mercy to the poor cannot disarm of all its perils, and even sanctify. Depend upon it, with you who live in the world, mercy is but another word for perseverance, and the touch of the Poor the Real Presence of your Lord.

iii

LACORDAIRE, in making up his majority of the saved, lays the chief stress on children, women, and the countless poor. Bossuet, commenting on the words of the seventy-first psalm, " He shall judge the poor of the people, and he shall save the children of the poor," draws a picture similar to that of Lacordaire. There is no doubt that our Lord's woes pronounced upon the rich are among the most painful and terrific mysteries of the Gospel, and should drive rich men into that facile, prompt, various, unasked, abundant, and self-denying almsgiving for the love of God, in which alone their safety consists.

MARIE Denise de Martignat, one of the first mothers of the Visitation, spent almost the first fifty years of her life in the courts of France and Savoy, but the spirit of the world never passed upon her heart, any more than the smell of fire upon the garments of the three children in the fiery furnace. She took the rich, high-born and prosperous as the matter for a special devotion, and desired to communicate the same devotion to every one she met. " Ah ! " she exclaimed, " they are hemmed round with no common misery ; they go down to hell without thinking of it, because their staircase thither is of gold and porphyry. Great in this world, they let themselves have no leisure to reflect that soon they will be very little ; having the habit of commanding others, they presume upon themselves, and live as if God, Heaven, and the Angels were under their obedience, as well as earth and men. How will they be disenchanted, when, in a moment, they shall discover themselves to have been, and now to be for ever, slaves of the devil ; or, if God shows them mercy, what a surprise it will be to them to find themselves in the kingdom of Heaven far below the poor and vile whom on earth they would not allow to come near them ! "

WORKS OF MERCY

V

HENCE, during her whole life, she possessed this enlightened compassion for the rich, and made special intercession for them. She said it was a greater charity to pray for them than for those who were languishing in hospitals and prisons. She celebrated the feasts of the canonised kings, queens, princes and princesses, with a particular reverence, and an unusual devotion. She declared that nothing ought at once to humble and encourage Christians more than the heroic sanctity of great people who have kept humility in the midst of glory, and have used this world as though they used it not. She was accustomed to fast on the vigils of these feasts, and all her prayers on those days were for the salvation of "great people." I do not know if it will seem so to others, but to me there is something extremely touching in this devotion, so truly spiritual, considerate and heavenly.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

IT is the peculiar beauty of the Old Testament that it brings out this truth to us in the most forcible and attractive manner. This probably is the secret of the hold which it lays of the minds of those who have become familiar with it in early youth, and of the deep basis of religious feeling which it seems to plant in them. Though it is made up of various books, differing in date, and scene, and style, though psalm and prophecy and moral strains mingle with history and biography, every one feels that it has, almost as completely as the New Testament, one spirit, one tone, one colour, one scope.

ii

WHETHER it is when Adam and Eve are doing penance in Asia, and Cain is wandering out on the great homeless earth, or whether it is in the patriarch's tent beneath the starry skies of Mesopotamia, or amid the brick fields of the Nile, or the silent glens of stern Sinai, or during the rough chivalric days of the Judges, or in the palaces of Jerusalem, or by the waters of the captivity, whether it be when Debbora

is chanting beneath her palm, or the king of Israel is singing to his harp, or amid the allegorical actions of some wailing prophet, or the conversations of the wise men of the stony Arabia, we are ever learning what it is to be a creature, and what it is to have a Creator. We are being taught the character of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God that was not like the gods of the heathen. We either see or hear what He desires of us, how He will treat us, the ways, so unlike human ways, in which He loves us and will show His love, His style of punishment, His manifold devices of mercy, what He meant human life to be, and how men were to use both each other and the earth which He had given them to farm.

iii

WE do not know why it is that a tale, the like of which in common history would barely interest us, should fascinate us in the words of inspiration, why ordinary things should seem sacred because they are related there, and why simple expressions should have a latent spell within them enabling them to fix themselves deep in our souls to be the germs of a strong and dutiful devotion through a long life, and then be a helpful power to us in death. It can only be because it is all so possessed

THE OLD AND THE NEW

with God. The true humble pathetic genius of a creature comes into our souls, and masters them. The knowledge of God becomes almost a personal familiarity with Him, and the thought of Him grows into the sight of Him. Look at the fathers of the desert and the elder saints of the Catholic Church, and see what giants of holiness they were, whose daily food was in the mysterious simplicity of the Sacred Scriptures! The Holy Book lies like a bunch of myrrh in the bosom of the Church, a power of sanctification like to which, in kind or in degree, there is no other, except the sacraments of the Precious Blood.

iv

AGES ago the Jewish people, after their deliverance from Egypt, had wandered over the desert. Its grey sands, its ruddy rocks, its stone-strewn plains, its regions of scant verdure, its sea-coast, and its wells of pastoral renown, had been the scenes of such wonders as the world had not beheld before. Never had the Creator interfered so visibly, or for so long a time together, in favour of His creatures. The whole camp, with its cloud and fire, its cruciform march, with Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasses, bearing the relics of Joseph, its moving church beautified with the spoils of Egypt, was a standing miracle.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

In Sinai God had thundered from the heights, pouring through that wandering Hebrew people over the whole world the glorious light and transcending faith of the unity of God, a doctrine that came to the world most fitly from the austere grandeur of a wilderness. There had those commandments of heavenly morality been given, under which we are living at the present day, and which shall be men's rule of life until the doom, the Judge's rule in fixing the doom of each.

V

IN our Christian childhood we have wandered with the Jews over that silent wilderness, learning the fear of God. In their pilgrimage we have seen a type of our own. In their vicissitudes we seemed almost to take part ourselves. The very names of the wells and halting-places sound like old songs in our ears, songs so early learned that they can never be forgotten. Here now was the very Creator Himself, in the reality of human childhood, wandering over that historic wilderness, reversing the Exodus, going to make Egypt His home, driven out of the delectable land of the old Canaanites by the very people whom He had led thither by a pillar of light, whose battles He had fought, whose victories He had gained, and whose

THE OLD AND THE NEW

tribes He had established, each in its characteristic and suitable allotment. There was Mary with her *Magnificat*, instead of Miriam and her glorious sea-side song ; and another Joseph, greater and dearer far than that saintly patriarch of old, who had saved the lives of men by husbanding the bread of Egypt, whereas this new Joseph was to guard in the same Egypt the living Bread of everlasting life. And that very wilderness both the Josephs had crossed.

IN ALL TIMES OF TEMPTATION

IF we are willing to take the authority of St. Bernard and Richard of St. Victor, of Cardinal Bona and Scaramelli, we must suppose that the devil is guiltless of by far the greater part of the sins of good people, and that even temptation is far less exclusively his domain than we are often in the habit of considering it. We must not, however, push this doctrine too far, nor extend it beyond the limits, surely wide enough, within which approved writers confine it. Nevertheless, admitted even so far, we shall find, if we have hitherto neglected it, that it is a doctrine full of practical results to us in the spiritual life. It gives us quite a different idea of our warfare. It throws a new light on scruples. It makes us change our tactics against temptation ; and above all, it facilitates the practices of humility and self-distrust. When we refer everything to the devil, and he is in our thoughts and on our lips at every moment, we may be sure that we are as yet but on the threshold of the spiritual life, and have but a shallow knowledge either of it or of ourselves. There is hardly any point of spirituality which has suffered more from the customary

exaggerations of men than this one of the devil's share in our temptations and our falls.

ii

ST. BERNARD writes : *Every one is his own enemy*. Man urges and precipitates himself into evil in such a way, that if he would only keep his own hands from suicide, he need fear the violence of no one else. Who can harm you, says St. Peter, if you have no desire except to do good ? Your own consent to evil is the only hand which can wound and kill you. If when the devil suggests evil to you, or the world invites you to it, you withhold your consent, no misfortune can befall you. The devil may push you, but he cannot throw you down, if you refuse him your consent. How plain it is then that man is his own principal and most dangerous enemy ! For we often attribute to the Spirit of God, and often also to the spirits of the devil, that which really comes only from the dispositions and impressions of nature. Every one therefore ought carefully to examine his heart, so that he may not be deceived by his own spirit, which St. Gregory calls a spirit of pride.

WE must not put too much upon the devil ; yet neither on the other hand must we be without fear of him, or without a true and Scriptural estimate of his awful and malignant office. He goes about seeking whom he may devour. He is a roaring lion, when the roar will affright us, and a noiseless serpent when success is to be ensured by secrecy. He has reduced the possibilities and probabilities of our destruction to a science which he applies with the most unrelenting vigour, the most masterly intelligence, an overbearing power, and with the most ubiquitous variety. If it were not for the thought of Grace, its abundance and its sovereignty, we should not dare to contemplate the ways and means of the Satanic kingdom. Yet nowhere is it a mere fight between man and the devil. Wherever temptation is, there God is also. There is not one which His will has not permitted, and there is not a permission which is not an act of love as well. "Where wert Thou, Lord ! while I was being tempted ?" cried the saint of the desert. "Close to you, My son, all the while," was the tender reply.

TEMPTATIONS which approach us by the senses are proof against all weapons except those of mortification and the sacraments. Temptations against Faith and Chastity are two classes apart, and have this peculiarity, that they are seldom to be directly resisted. We must stand aside, and let them pass ; or we must turn our backs on them, and fly. We must distract ourselves from them instead of striking them. There are other temptations, which are merely feelers to explore our possibilities of sin. The devil sends these out to gain knowledge of us, as he cannot read our hearts ; just as a besieging army sends rockets here and there into a city to try for the powder magazines. But among all kinds of temptations, there is no one class, which is any sign that our souls are in an evil state. Spiritual writers lay this down as an undoubted fact ; and yet how much self-torment there is in the world because silly peevish souls will persist in acting as if its contrary were true.

WHEN St. Stephen's heroic faith was passing through its extremest temptations, he beheld Our Lord, not sitting, but standing at the right hand of the Father, expressive of the aid He was rendering to His servant in his hour of need. If all temptations are terrible, all are in God's hands, and so we may be tranquil and of good cheer. There are times of temptation, when our own past sin, or our present culpable inadvertence, is the cause of them. We have brought them upon ourselves ; and this makes them all the harder for our self-love to bear. Still, even though they are the just and immediate chastisement of our own faults, the patient endurance of them is not the less meritorious ; and disquietude forms no part of accepted penance. From the times of temptation we pass to its kinds. Some temptations are frequent : and there is a peculiar danger in their frequency. They dissipate us, and break up the calm of our recollection. Or they tire us, and at last we sit down and give up the battle out of weariness. Or we get used to them, and lose our wholesome fear of them. These frequent temptations have generally some connection with our ruling passion. Some temptations are durable, and they also have dangers of their own and consolations

IN ALL TIMES OF TEMPTATION

of their own. Their chief danger is their outliving our powers of perseverance; and their chief consolation is that their very durability is a sign they have not triumphed.

vi

IF temptations frighten us rather by their obstinacy and long continuance, as if they were determined not to leave us until they had got a fall out of us, we must be on our guard indeed, but with joy and thanksgiving. For the very continuance of the temptation is a proof that so far at least it has not been consented to. The dog goes on barking, says St. Francis of Sales, because he has not been let in. Furthermore, which may be the result of Satan's natural sagacity and foresight, an access of new and unusual temptations is often a sign that a season of peculiar grace is at hand. Therefore, with Jacob, we must wrestle till the dawn.

FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF ENTHUSIASM

HAS real piety a greater or a deadlier enemy than the popular ideas of enthusiasm? If a person loses his taste for worldly amusements and blameless dissipations, if he prefers the church to the theatre, early Mass to lying in bed, almsgiving to fine dress, spiritual books to novels, visiting the poor to driving in the park, prayer to parties, he is forthwith set down as an enthusiast; and though people do not exactly know what enthusiasm is, yet they know that it is something inconceivably bad; for it is something young people should be especially warned against, and above all pious people, as most needing admonition. The mere word enthusiasm is a power in itself; for it accuses, tries, condemns and punishes a man all at once. Nothing can be more complete.

ii

YET, in the first place, dear reader, look over your numerous acquaintance; and tell us—whatever may be your notion of religious enthusiasm, did you ever know any one injured by it? You have heard that it makes people mad:

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did you ever have one of your own friends driven mad by it? And while you condemned their enthusiasm, did you ever yourself get quite rid of a feeling that, however unfit it was for life, it would be far from an undesirable state to die in? In the next place, what is enthusiasm? Dr. Johnson tells us that it is a "vain belief of private revelations": did any of your devout friends dream that they had had private revelations? It is "a heat of imagination": did not your friends seem to grow cold rather than hot? Were they not often tempted to go your way because it was pleasanter? Did they not find it hard to persevere in spiritual practices, and did they not embrace them, not at all from any imagination hot or cold, but simply because they thought it right, and because Grace had begun to change their tastes? It is "an exultation of ideas": now were not the ideas of your friends, in any true sense of the word, rather depressed than exalted? Were they not more humble, more submissive, more obliging; or, at least, whenever they were not so, did you not distinctly feel that they were acting inconsistently with their religious profession? Were any of their ideas in any sense exalted, even of those which had most to do with their pious practices? Were not even those ideas rather subdued than exalted?

iii

THESE are Dr. Johnson's three definitions. They will not suit you. Do you mean then by enthusiasm, doing too much for God? You would not like to say so. Do you mean doing it in the wrong way? But is daily Mass wrong, is almsgiving wrong, are spiritual books wrong, is visiting the poor wrong, is prayer wrong? Or will you say it is doing them instead of other things, which are not sinful? Well! but is not this tyranny? A man might answer, If an opera would be to me the most tiresome of penances, or a ball the most unendurable of wearinesses, why am I obliged to go? Or if I simply prefer prayer to the opera, or spiritual reading to the ball, why am I to have less liberty in gratifying my tastes than you in gratifying yours? Do you mean that God spoils everything He touches, and is a mar-pleasure wherever He interferes? The truth is that by enthusiasm, men mean the being more religious than themselves. And this is an unpardonable offence; for they are the standards of what is moderate, sober, rational, and reflective. Enthusiasm, in common parlance, has no other meaning. Whoever uses the word is simply making public confession of his own tepidity.

SINS OF OMISSION

WHEN Our Blessed Lord describes the days before the Flood, and again those which shall precede the end of the world, He portrays them rather as times of worldliness than open sin. Men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage : and He says no more. Now none of these things are wrong in themselves. We can eat and drink, as the Apostle teaches us, to the glory of God, and marriage was a Divine institution at the time of the Flood, and is now a Christian sacrament. In the same way when He describes the life of the only person whom the Gospel narrative follows into the abode of the lost, He sums it up as the being clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasting sumptuously every day. Here again there is nothing directly sinful in the actions which He names. It surely cannot be a mortal sin to have fine linen, nor will a man lose a state of Grace because he feasts sumptuously every day, provided that no other sins follow in the train of this soft life. The malice of it all is in its worldliness, in the fact that this was all or nearly all the lives of those before the flood, of those before the days of anti-christ, and of the unhappy Dives. Life

SINS OF OMISSION

began and ended in worldliness. There was nothing for God. It was comprised in the pleasures of the world, it rested on them, it was satisfied by them. Its characteristic was sins of omission.

ii

WORLDLINESS might almost be defined to be a state of habitual sins of omission. The devil urges men on to great positive breaches of the Divine Commandments. The passions of the flesh impel sinners to give way to their passions by such dreadful sins as catch the eyes of men and startle them by their iniquity. Worldliness only leads to these things occasionally, and by accident. It neither scandalises others, nor frightens the sinner himself. This is the very feature of it, which, rightly considered, ought to be so terrifying. The reaction of a great sin, or the shame which follows it, are often the pioneers of Grace. They give self-love such a serious shock, that under the influence of it men return to God. Worldliness hides from the soul its real malice, and thus keeps at arm's length from it some of the most persuasive motives to repentance. Thus the Pharisees are depicted in the Gospel as being eminently worldly. It is worldliness, not immorality, which is put before us. There is even much of moral

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decency, much of respectable observance, much religious profession ; and yet when our Blessed Saviour went among them, they were further from Grace than the publicans and sinners. The Magdalen, the Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery—it was these who gathered round Jesus, attracted by His sweetness, and touched by the Grace which went out from Him.

THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER

WITH whom is it we pray ? Never alone; of this we are sure, whenever we rightly pray. There is One dwelling in us who is co-equal, co-eternal God, proceeding from the Father and the Son. He forms the words in our hearts, and then puts music in our cry, when we exclaim, "Abba, Father!" He is our "access to the Father." He "strengthens us with might into the inward man." He makes us "speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father;" He is the Spirit to whom "we pray at all times, by all prayer and supplication, and watch in the same, with all instance and supplication for all the Saints." He is the Spirit "who helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth." Does not the mystery of prayer deepen and deepen upon us?

ii

NEXT, look at the incredible ease of prayer. Every time, place, posture is fitting ; for there is no time, place, or posture, in and by which we cannot reverently confess the Presence of God. Talent is not needed. Eloquence is out of place. Dignity is no recommendation. Our want is our eloquence, our misery our recommendation. Thought is quick as lightning, and quick as lightning can it multiply effectual prayer. Actions can pray ; sufferings can pray. There need be no ceremonies ; there are no rubrics to keep. The whole function is expressed in a word ; it is simply this—the child at his father's knee, his words stumbling over each other from very earnestness, and his wistful face pleading better than his hardly intelligible prayer.

iii

ST. BERNARD says in his Lent sermons that all bad prayers are bad for one of three reasons : either they are timid, or they are tepid, or they are temerarious. We may dismiss, therefore, these three kinds of prayer as not likely to be answered. Answers to prayer have several characteristics which we ought to bear in mind. For the most part they are long in coming ; and the thing asked,

when it does come, comes often in another shape ; and as often, something else comes instead of it. It is false spirituality which teaches us not to pray, and to pray perseveringly, for the good of individuals. But our power of impetration depends very much on two things, our having habits of prayer and being in habitual communication with God, and our praying in the pure spirit of simple faith.

iv

WE always receive three gifts from God when we pray humbly and earnestly. The first, St. Nilus says, is the gift of prayer itself. " God wishes to bless thee for a longer time while thou art persevering in thy prayer ; for what more blessed than to be detained in colloquy with God ? " We pretend for a while not to hear the petitions of those we love, because we so love to hear them asking. So Joseph feigned with his brethren. You say, observes St. John Climacus, I have received nothing from God, when all the while you have received one of His greatest gifts, perseverance in prayer. He delays to hear His Saints, says St. Gregory, that He may increase their merits. By this perseverance we prepare ourselves to receive the Grace with much greater fruit than if it were given us at once. St. Isidore says, " God

delays to hear your prayer either because you are not in good dispositions to receive what you ask, or that you may be able to receive more excellent gifts which He is desirous of conferring upon you." So, says Gerson, it happens to us as it does sometimes to a beggar, to whom men give a more liberal alms because they have kept him waiting at their door so long.

V

THERE are many cautions which are necessary in the use of vocal prayer. We must be careful not to burden ourselves with too many of them, and it is well to begin them always with a mental act of the Divine presence. When we have given way to distractions, and our attention has been imperceptibly averted from what we are saying, and at last we wake up to a consciousness of it, it very much concerns our peace of mind that we should *not* say over again what we said with inattention. We must simply stop and make an act of contrition, and so proceed. The opposite conduct gives rise to many scruples, and ends by making vocal prayer burdensome and odious. When slovenly habits have crept over us, we must set matters right by disallowing ourselves in certain liberties which we have taken, and so cure our slovenliness by taking a few steps in the



THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER

direction of the other extreme. Thus, if we have been in the habit of saying vocal prayers out of doors, or walking about, or in bed, and some perceptible negligence has come of it, it is better for a little while to abstain from doing so, and say them in our own room, or kneeling, or in some slightly penitential way. It is said of St. Charles Borromeo that he would not say off by heart the more familiar parts of the Missal and Breviary, because he considered that his keeping his eyes fixed on the book and reading the words conduced to devotion.

THE HOLY DEAD

DEVOTION for the Dead does not rest in words and feelings, nor does it merely lead to action indirectly and at last. It is action in itself, and thus it is a substantial devotion. It speaks, and a deed is done ; it loves, and a pain is lessened ; it sacrifices, and a soul is delivered. Nothing can be more solid. We might almost dare to compare it, in its pure measure, to the efficacious voice of God, which works what it says, and effects what it utters and wills, and a creation comes. The royal devotion of the Church is the works of mercy ; and see how they are all satisfied in this devotion for the Dead ! It feeds the hungry souls with Jesus, the Bread of Angels. It gives them to drink in their incomparable thirst His Precious Blood. It clothes the naked with a robe of glory. It visits the sick with mighty powers to heal and at the least consoles them by the visit. It frees the captives with a Heavenly and eternal freedom, from a bondage drearer far than death. It takes in the strangers, and Heaven is the hospice into which it receives them. It buries the dead in the Bosom of Jesus in everlasting rest.

THE HOLY DEAD

ii

WHEN the last doom shall come, and Our Dearest Lord shall ask those seven questions of His judicial process, those interrogatories of the works of mercy, how happy will that man be, and it may be the poorest beggar amongst us who never gave an alms because he has had to live on alms himself, who shall hear his own defence sweetly and eloquently taken up by crowds of blessed souls, to whom he has done all these things while they waited in their prison-house of hope! Three times a day St. Francis of Sales put himself in the presence of God as before his judge, and tried to judge himself in his Saviour's way. Let us but do that, and we shall become so many servitors of Michael, so many guardian angels of that beautiful but melancholy land of suffering and expectant souls.

TOUCHINESS

TOUCHINESS about our reputation is a disease most fatal to the spiritual life, and yet one to which spiritual men are subject to a strange and unexpected degree. It is a perfect cankerworm to an interior spirit, and one of the most prolific causes of lukewarmness. Earth may be an unhappy place ; but it is not the pressure of God's Providence which causes most of the unhappiness, nor the roaring of the devil going about seeking whom he may devour. It is the human spirit operating in quarrels, coldness, conceit, rivalry, envy, strife, jealousies, misunderstandings, and an exaggerated idea of little slights and wrongs. Now the suffering of all these things, and it is very acute, comes from fretfulness about our reputation. The excessive care of our reputation is naturally a besetting sin of times whose spirit of publicity does really make a Christian duty of the preservation of our good name.

But let us consider what this fretfulness brings in its train. It is obviously quite inconsistent with interior peace, which is the soul of the spiritual life. For how can we be at peace if we make ourselves responsible for what is not in our power,

but escapes from us on all sides? It breeds an exaggerated idea of our own importance, and so destroys humility. It causes suspiciousness, and so kills simplicity. It is a daily source of irritability, and so ruins charity. It is the crowned king of distractions, and so draws off our attention from God and eternal things. Yet see what folly it is! For if we get what we wish, what does it amount to in nine cases out of ten, but being better thought of than we deserve, looking differently to man's eye and to God's eye?

ii

BUT surely in reality we are what we are in the judgment of God, and we are nothing more. Thus, of all unreal satisfactions, the preservation for the moment of our reputation is at once the most unfruitful, the most anxious, and the most precarious. The only decent pretence for such a jealousy is that we may not lose the means of serving God; and to act with a single eye to His good pleasure would be a safer and more successful rule of conduct, than to put our reputation out to nurse with the thousand tongues of men.

THE principal remedy of all is to keep our eye steadily fixed on the beautiful and potent example of our Blessed Lord in this very respect. As to His reputation as a teacher of doctrine, He was called a fool, and the questions of Caiphas express the public opinion about Him. As to His morals, He was called seditious, drunkard and glutton. As to His truth, He was esteemed a heretic, and a Samaritan, and was openly accused of witchcraft; and when condemned to death He made no defence. The lives of the saints hardly seem wonderful, when we have well studied the excessive humiliations of Jesus with regard to His reputation. Even to those who are far from saints it may be given by God to know the sweetness of calumny, when we feel ourselves sinking out of man's sight into the Divine depths of our Saviour's dear and awful Passion.

KINDNESS KIN TO GODLINESS

WE must first ask ourselves what kindness is. Kindness is the overflowing of self upon others. We put others in the place of self. We treat them as we would wish to be treated ourselves. We change places with them. For the time self is another, and others are self. Our self-love takes the shape of complacency in unselfishness. We cannot speak of the virtues without thinking of God. What would the overflow of self upon others be in Him the Ever-blessed and Eternal? It was the act of creation. Creation was Divine kindness. From it as from a fountain flow the possibilities, the powers, the blessings of all created kindness. This is an honourable genealogy for kindness. Then, again, kindness is the coming to the rescue of others, when they need it and it is in our power to supply what they need; and this is the work of the Attributes of God towards His creatures. His omnipotence is for ever making up our deficiency of power. His justice is continually correcting our erroneous judgments. His mercy is always consoling our fellow-creatures under our hardheartedness. His truth is perpetually hindering the consequences of our falsehood. His omniscience

makes our ignorance succeed as if it were knowledge. His perfections are incessantly coming to the rescue of our imperfections. This is the definition of Providence ; and kindness is our imitation of this Divine action.

ii

MOREOVER, kindness is also like Divine grace ; for it gives men something which neither self nor nature can give them. What it gives them is something of which they are in want, or something which only another person can give, such as consolation ; and besides this, the manner in which this is given is a true gift itself, better far than the thing given : and what is all this but an allegory of Grace ? See how, turn which way we will, kindness is entangled with the thought of God ! The secret impulse out of which kindness acts is an instinct which is the noblest part of ourselves, the most undoubted remnant of the image of God, which was given us at the first. We must therefore never think of kindness as being a common growth of our nature, common in the sense of being of little value. It is the nobility of man. In all its modifications it reflects a heavenly type. It runs up into eternal mysteries. It is a Divine thing rather than a human one, and it is human

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because it springs from the soul of man just at the point where the Divine image was graven deepest.

Such is kindness. Now let us consider its office in the world, in order that we may get a clearer idea of itself. It makes life more endurable. The burden of life presses heavily upon multitudes of the children of men. It is a yoke, very often of such a peculiar nature, that familiarity, instead of practically lightening it, makes it harder to bear. Perseverance is the hand of time pressing the yoke down upon our galled shoulders with all its might. There are many men for whom life is always approaching the unbearable. It stops only just short of it. We expect it to transgress every moment. But, without having recourse to these extreme cases, sin alone is sufficient to make life intolerable to a virtuous man. Actual sin is not essential to this. The possibility of sinning, the danger of sinning, the facility of sinning, the temptation to sin, the example of so much sin around us, and, above all, the sinful unworthiness of men much better than ourselves—these are sufficient to make life drain us to the last dregs of our endurance. In all these cases it is the office of kindness to make life more bearable ; and if its success in its office is often only partial, some amount of success is at least invariable.

KINDNESS KIN TO GODLINESS

It is true that we make ourselves more unhappy than other people make us. No slight portion of this self-inflicted unhappiness arises from our sense of justice being so continually wounded by the events of life, while the incessant friction of the world never allows the wound to heal. There are some men whose practical talents are completely swamped by the keenness of their sense of injustice. They go through life as failures because the pressure of injustice upon themselves or the sight of its pressing upon others has unmanned them. If they begin a line of action, they cannot go through with it. They are perpetually shying, like a mettlesome horse, at the objects by the road side. They had much in them ; but they have died without anything coming of them. Kindness steps forward to remedy this evil also. Each solitary kind action that is done, the whole world over, is working briskly in its own sphere to restore the balance between right and wrong. The more kindness there is on the earth at any given moment the greater is the tendency of the balance between right and wrong to correct itself and remain in equilibrium. Nay, this is short of the truth. Kindness allies itself with right to invade the wrong, and beat it off the earth. Justice is necessarily an aggressive virtue, and kindness is the amiability of justice.

iii

MINDFUL of its Divine origin, and of its hereditary descent from the primal act of creation, this dear virtue is for ever entering into God's original dispositions as Creator. He meant the world to be a happy world ; and kindness means it also. He gave it the power to be happy ; and kindness was a great part of that very power. Kindness has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence or learning ; and these three last have never converted anyone, unless they were kind also. In short, kindness makes us as Gods to each other. Yet, while it lifts us so high, it sweetly keeps us low. For the continual sense, which a kind heart has, of its own need of kindness, keeps it humble. There are no hearts to which kindness is so indispensable, as those that are exuberantly kind themselves. It is not improbable that no man ever had a kind action done to him, who did not in consequence commit a sin less than he otherwise would have done. There are few gifts more precious to a soul than to make its sins fewer. It is in our power to do this almost daily, and sometimes often in a day. We all of us need encouragement to do good. The path of virtue, even when it is not uphill, is rough and stony, and each day's journey is a little longer than our strength admits of,

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only there are no means of shortening it. The twenty-four hours are the same to everybody, except the idle, and to the idle they are thirty-six, for weariness and dulness. You may love God, and love Him truly, as you do, and high motives may be continually before you. Nevertheless you must be quite conscious to yourself of being soon fatigued, nay perhaps of a normal lassitude growing with your years ; and you must remember how especially the absence of sympathy tried you, and how all things began to look like delusion because no one encouraged you in your work. O what a wretched thing it is to be unkind ! I think, with the thought of the Precious Blood, I can better face my sins at the last judgment, than my unkindness, with all its miserable fertility of evil consequences.

iv

MEN grow kinder as they grow older. There are, of course, natures which are kindly from the cradle : but not many men have seen a really kind boy or girl. In like manner, as kindness in the natural world implies age, in the spiritual world it implies Grace. It does not belong to the fervour of beginnings, but to the solidity of progress. Indeed Christian kindness implies so much Grace, that it almost assures

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the exercise of humility. A proud man is seldom a kind man. Humility makes us kind, and kindness makes us humble. It is one of the many instances, in the matter of the virtues, of good qualities being at once not only causes and effects together, but also their own causes and their own effects. It would be foolish to say that humility is an easy virtue. The very lowest degree of it is a difficult height to climb. But this much may be said for kindness, that it is the easiest road to humility, and infallible as well as easy: and is not humility just what we want, just what we are this moment coveting, just what will break down barriers, and give us free course on our way to God? It is kindness which enables most men to put off the inseparable unpleasantness of youth. It watches the thoughts, controls the words, and helps us to unlearn early manhood's inveterate habit of criticism. It is astonishing how masterful it is in its influence over our dispositions, and yet how gentle, quiet, consistent and successful. It makes us thoughtful and considerate. Detached acts of kindness may be the offspring of impulse. Yet he is mostly a good man, whose impulses are good. But in the long run, habitual kindness is not a mere series of generous impulses, but the steadfast growth of generous deliberation. Much thought must go to consistent

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kindness, and much self-denying legislation. How shall we express in one word these many things which Kindness does for us who practice it? It prepares us with an especial preparation for the paths of disinterested love of God.

V

NOW surely we cannot say that this subject of kindness is an unimportant one. It is in reality a great part of the spiritual life. It is found in all its regions, and in all of them with different functions, and in none of them playing an inferior part. It is also a peculiar participation of the spirit of Jesus, which is itself the life of all holiness. It reconciles worldly men to religious people; and really, however contemptible worldly men are in themselves, they have souls to save, and it were much to be wished that devout persons would make their devotion a little less angular and aggressive to worldly people, provided they can do so without lowering practice or conceding principle. Devout people are, as a class, the least kind of all classes. This is a scandalous thing to say; but the scandal of the fact is so much greater than the scandal of acknowledging it, that I will brave this last, for the sake of a greater good. Religious people are an unkindly lot. Poor human nature cannot

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do everything ; and kindness is too often left uncultivated, because men do not sufficiently understand its value. Men may be charitable, yet not kind ; merciful, yet not kind ; self-denying, yet not kind. If they would add a little common kindness to their uncommon graces, they would convert ten where they now only abate the prejudices of one. There is a sort of spiritual selfishness in devotion, which is rather to be regretted than condemned. I should not like to think it is unavoidable. Certainly its interfering with kindness is not unavoidable. It is only a little difficult and calls for watchfulness. Kindness, as a Grace, is certainly not sufficiently cultivated, while the self-gravitating, self-contemplating, self-inspecting parts of the spiritual life are cultivated too exclusively.

THE TEST OF TENDERNESS

IT is of paramount importance that we should be thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of the Gospel ; and the missing of it so frequently as men do, is partly owing to their not remembering every hour of the day that our Blessed Lord is God, and partly to their mixing some other idea of God with that of Father, and allowing the harsher element to preponderate. The spirit of the Gospel is tenderness. The absence of tenderness in religion is often of itself enough to stay a man's growth in holiness. A man may be in a certain sense religious : he may fear God, hate sin, be strictly conscientious, and honestly desire to save his soul. All these are most excellent things. But you cannot say that the Saints were men of this sort. They had about them a sweetness, a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, an affectionateness, nay, I will dare to say, a poetry which gave quite a different character to their devotion. They were living images of Jesus. This, in our far inferior measure and degree, we must also strive to be, if we would grow in holiness.

THE TEST OF TENDERNESS

ii

BY tenderness is not meant a mere Bimpressionableness, soft-heartedness, or a facility of tears. These are as often marks of cowardice, laziness, and a want of resolute will and earnestness. True tenderness begins in various ways. Its progress is marked by a sorrow for sin, without thinking of its punishment, by what I have elsewhere called a touchiness about the interests of Jesus, by childlike docility to our superiors and spiritual directors, by mortifying ourselves and not feeling it a yoke, by never thinking of stopping short at precepts without going on to counsels, and by a very faint, incipient, and as yet scarcely discernible, appetite for humiliations. According as it is formed in our souls, all the characteristics of sanctity gather to it and group themselves round it. For love is a greater safeguard against sin than fear, and tenderness renders our conversion to God more entire by making it more easy. It especially attracts Jesus, whose spirit it is, and who will not be outdone in His own peculiar sweetness. Without this tenderness there can be no growth; and while it renders duty more easy, and consequently the performance of duty more perfect, it instils into us the especially Christianlike instincts, such as love of suffering, silence

THE TEST OF TENDERNESS

under injustice, a thirst for humiliations, and the like. Moreover it deepens sorrow for sin, into a contrition which is worth more to the penitent soul than almost any gift that can be named. Look at the phenomena of the Incarnation, what were they? Helplessness, unnecessary and unobliged suffering, sacrifice, abasement, continual defeat, no assertion of rights, carelessness of success, and most pathetic wrongs. And what is our response to all these things, but the temper which is expressed by that one word tenderness?

iii

THE Sacred Infancy teaches us tenderness; the Passion tenderness; the Blessed Sacrament tenderness; the Sacred Heart tenderness. But look at the common life of Jesus among men and you will see more clearly what this tenderness is like. There is first the tenderness of Our Lord's outward deportment. The narrative of Palm Sunday is an instance of it. Also His way with His disciples, His way with sinners, and His way with those in affliction or grief who threw themselves in His road. He quenched not the smoking flax nor broke the bruised reed. This was a complete picture of Him. There was tenderness in His very looks, as when He looked on the rich young man and loved him; and St. Peter was converted by a look. His

THE TEST OF TENDERNESS

whole conversation was imbued with tenderness. The tone of His parables, the absence of terrors in His sermons, and the abyss of forgiveness which His teaching opens out, all exemplify this. He is no less tender in His answer to questions, as when He was accused of being possessed, and when He was struck on the Face. His very reprimands were steeped in tenderness ; witness the woman taken in adultery, James and John, and the Samaritan, and Judas ; nor was His zeal less tender, as was evidenced when He rebuked the brothers who would fain have called down fire from Heaven upon the Samaritan villagers, and also by the sweet meekness of His Divine indignation when He cleared the temple.

iv

NOW if Our Lord is our model, and if His spirit be ours, it is plain that a Christianlike tenderness must make a deep impression upon our spiritual life ; and indeed give it its principal tone and character. Without tenderness we can never have that spirit of generosity in which we saw that we must serve God. It is as necessary to our interior life, or our relation with God, as it is to our exterior life or relation with others ; and there is one gift of the Holy Ghost, namely piety, whose special office it is to confer this tenderness.

THE FLIGHT FROM GOD

EVEN to us, down in the deep valleys where the merciful inquisitiveness of Grace has found us out, there is something inexpressibly mournful in the way in which God is excluded from His own Creation. We are considering now the mystery of the Creator's flight from His creatures. Is there not also something quite as dreadful in the flight of the creatures from their Creator, which we see going on all day? When faith has opened our eyes, what a scene the world presents! Everywhere God with His omnipresent love is pursuing His creatures, His guilty creatures; but it is to save them, not to punish them. There is not a recess of the world, not a retirement of poverty, not a haunt of sin, not an unlikely or unbecoming place for so vast a Majesty, where He is not following His creatures, and trying almost to force His great gifts upon them. Swifter than the lightning, stronger than the ocean, more universal than the air, is His glorious many-sided compassion poured out over the world which He has made.

EVERYWHERE are men flying from this generous, this merciful, this tender pursuit. It seems as if the grand object of their lives was to avoid God, as if time were a respite from the necessity of God's presence in eternity, which it is unfair of Him to interfere with, as if space were a convenience expressly provided for creatures to get out of the way of their Creator. Little boys even are flying from Him with all their might and main, as if they understood the matter just as well as grown-up men, and had made up their minds as determinedly about it. God speaks, entreats, pleads, cries aloud ; but still they run. He doubles His sunbeams upon them, to win their hearts by the excess of His fatherly indulgence ; but they run. He throws shadows and darkness over them, to make them sober and wise ; but they run. He *will* have them. Great graces go forth to their souls, like swift stones from a sling, and they fall. But they are up again in a moment, and continue their flight.

OR if He catches up with them, because they are too much hurt to rise on the instant, they only let Him wipe the blood and earth from their wound, and kiss them sweetly on the forehead, and they are off again. He will not be baffled. He will hide Himself in the water of a Sacrament, and make loving prey of infants, before they have reached the use of reason. It is well ; but then He must slay them also, if He will keep them ; for almost before they can walk, they will run away from Him.

UNHAPPINESS

UNHAPPINESS is not without mystery even in a fallen world. By rights there should be no unhappiness at all. For is not the whole world full of God everywhere, and can there be unhappiness in the neighbourhood of God ? How much goodness and kindness is there in everyone around us, if we only take a kindly view of them ourselves ! Sin is easily forgiven to those who are in earnest. Grace is prodigally bestowed. There is an almost incredible amount of actual enjoyment, and pain and suffering themselves are quickly turned to sanctity. Yet for all this the unhappiness of the world is real. Almost every heart on earth is a sanctuary of secret sorrow. With some the grief is fresh. With others it is old. With immense numbers the unhappiness is literally lifelong, one out of which there is no possible escape except through the single door of death. With some it arises with having chosen an unfit lot in life from the first. With others it is from the unkindness, misconduct, or misunderstanding of those they love. In some cases men have to suffer for their religion, and its consequences are made by the cruelty of others to last to the end of their days. Not unfrequently

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it comes from men's characters, or from their sins, or from some consequences of these. Now and then it is the burden of a broken heart, a heart which has been over-weighted, and so has snapped, and thus lost its elasticity and the power of throwing off its sorrows. To much suffering time brings no healing. The broken heart lies bleeding in the hand of its Heavenly Father. He will look to it. No one else can.

ii

SORROW is to the elect on earth, what the Beatific Vision is to the Saints in Heaven. It is God's presence, His manifestation of Himself, His unfailing reward. We must not be amazed therefore if new efforts to serve God bring new sorrows in their train. By the supernatural principles of the spiritual life, they ought to do so. If we are able to bear them, these sorrows will come at once. Their delay is only the index of God's estimation of our weakness. Yet we need not fear that they will be disproportioned to our strength. God's blows are not dealt out at random. Our crosses are poised to a nicety by Divine wisdom, and then Divine love planes them, in order to make them at once smoother and lighter. But we can have no real comfort in devotion, if we are without trials. We have no proof that God

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accepts us, no security against delusion. We know that the stars are in their old places in the sky ; but in different states of the atmosphere they seem much farther off than at other times, or again much nearer, like teardrops of light on the very point of falling to the earth. So is it with God. Joy makes Him seem far off, while sorrow brings Him near, almost down into our bosom. When sorrows come, we feel instinctively their connection with the graces which have gone before, just as temptations so often have an odour about them of past victories. They come up, one after another, dealing their several blows upon our poor hearts, with such a modest heavenly significance upon their faces, that it is easy to recognise angels beneath the thin disguise. As we touch them, even while the thrill goes through us, we feel that we are almost handling with our hands our own final perseverance, such solid evidence are they of our adoption, so full of substantial graces in their presence, and leaving such a legacy of blessings when they go. A heart without sorrows is like a world without a revelation. It has nothing but a twilight of God about it.

FURTHERMORE our sorrow must be our own. We must not expect anyone else to understand it. It is one of the conditions of true sorrow, that it should be misunderstood. Sorrow is the most individual thing in the whole world. We must not expect therefore to meet with sympathy at all adequate to what we are suffering. It will be a great thing if it be suitable, even though it is imperfect. It is a very desolate thing to have leaned on sympathy, and found that it would not bear our weight, with such a burden of sorrow upon our backs. It is very difficult to erect ourselves again. The heart sinks upon itself in dismay. It has used its last remaining strength to reach the place where it would rest itself, and now what is left for it, but a faintness which opens all the wounds afresh, and a dismal conviction that the grief is less tolerable than it was before? It is best therefore to keep our sorrows as secret as we can. Unfitting sympathy irritates us, and makes us sin. Inadequate sympathy lets the lame limb fall harshly to the ground. The denial of sympathy excites almost a querulous despair. God knows everything. There are volumes of comfort in that. God means everything. There is light for every darkness out of that simple truth. Our hearts are full of

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angels when they are full of sorrows. Let us make them our company, and go on our road, smiling all the day, scattering such sweetness round us as mourners only are allowed to scatter, and God will understand us, when we go to Him.

iv

JESUS will be a cause of blessed sorrow to every one of us. There are very many happy earthly things which we must sacrifice for Him ; or if we have not the heart to do so, He will have the kind cruelty to take them from us. Persecution is a word of many meanings, a thing of countless shapes. It must come infallibly to every one who loves our dearest Lord. It may come through the hard tongues of the worldly, or in the suspicions and jealousies and judgements of those we love. In the peace of family love and domestic union it often comes from hands which make it hard to be endured ; and because of religion, there is keen misery where the casual visitor sees nothing but the edification of mutual love. Who was ever let alone to serve Jesus as he wished ? It is idle to expect it. The husband's love rises against it in the wife. The mother will tear her children from the Saviour's arms. The father looks with suspicion on the claims of God, and

jealousy of the Creator will make him harsh to a child who has never given him an hour of trouble in life beside, and to whom he has never been harsh before. The brother will forego the manliness of fraternal affection, and bring the bitterness of the world's judgements into the sacred circle of home, if Jesus dares to lay a finger on his sister. O poor, poor world ! And it is always the good who are the worst in this respect. Let this be laid to heart, and pondered. Outside of us, beside this inevitable persecution, our Lord will bring trials and crosses round us, at once to preserve our Grace and to augment it. The more we love him the thicker they will be. Nay, our love of Him often gets us into trouble we hardly know how. It almost leads us into faults, into imprudences to be repented of. Suddenly, especially when we are fervent, the ground gives way under our feet, and we sink into a pit, and in the retrospect, our fall seems inexcusable, and yet how did it come to pass ? How also is it within the soul ? Are there not such things as the pains of love ? Are they not more common than its joys ?

UNHAPPINESS

V

THEN there is the worse pain of not feeling our love, of seeming to lose our love, of its for ever slipping away from us. There are also interior trials, by which self-love is put to a painful death, and a cleansing of our inmost souls by fire, which is exceeding agony. Then there are the distresses into which the love of Jesus entraps us. It persuades us to give up this world, to put out all the lights wherewith earth had made our hearts gay, to break ties, to eschew loves, to commit ourselves to hard dull lives, and then it leaves us. God hides His countenance from us. All view of the other world is shut off from us. Just as it is at sundown, no sooner has the last rim sunk below the horizon, than, as if evoked by a spell, from river-side, from woody hollow, from pastures where the kine are feeding, from meadows with the haycocks standing, there rises up a cold white blinding mist : so is it in the soul, no sooner is God's Face gone, than past sins, ghastly things, break up from the graves in which absolution laid them, and present imperfections, and unknown temptations, and chilling impossibilities, of perseverance, all rise up together, and involve the soul in the coldest gloomiest desolation, through which no star can pierce, and it is much if

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a sickly whiteness tells us that there is a moon somewhere. Who does not know these things? It is no use shuddering. They are not on us now ; but they will come back again, be sure, when their hour arrives. Thus Jesus is in us a cause of sorrow, in us He is a sign to be contradicted, in us is He set for the rise and fall of many.

MOTHER OF SORROWS

OUR Lady's physical nature, free from all the ruin of disease, exempt from the disorganisation consequent on sin, was full of the keenest vitality, of the most delicate susceptibilities, of the most tender and lively sensitiveness, and endowed with a most fine and amazing capability of suffering. Hence there was nothing, either in reason or sense, to deaden a single blow. Use did not make her sorrows more tolerable; continuity did not confuse their distinctness. Not one of them was local; they were felt all through, with a swift circulation and a fiery sharpness which exempted no part of her body or soul from its piercing anguish, or gave so much as a transient dispensation to this or that particular faculty. Tranquil herself with that unutterable tranquillity of hers, there was no repose in her sorrows. They never left her. They never slept. They gave her no trace. Day and night was their uproar heard round the walls of the city of her soul. Day and night their flaming shafts fell in showers all over her most sacred shrines.

MOTHER OF SORROWS

ii

IF there be one department of practical religion from which we could desire that a sentence of perpetual banishment were passed upon mere sentiment and feeling it would be the department of Mary. Mary is a great reality of God, and sentiment is prone to rob us of our reality by turning substance into fancy, solidity into prettiness, and so overclothing the outside that we almost come to doubt whether there be an inside at all. Let then the exceeding beauty of Mary's martyrdom find us out if it will, and catch us up into the air, and surprise us into sweet tears, and calm the trouble of our sympathies ; but do not let us seek it, or go out of our doctrinal, devotional way for it. Yet if artistic things can in any way increase our genuine love of God, let even them be welcome.

iii

AS the Bible is a spoken revelation, so in a certain sense Mary is an emblematic revelation. God uses her as an instrument whereby to make many things plain which would otherwise have rested in obscurity. It is a line of thought familiar to theologians, which regards her as a kind of image of the Most Holy Trinity. As the

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Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, she shadows forth in herself, faintly of course, because she is a creature, but nevertheless truly, the revelations of the Three Divine Persons.* God's perfections in Himself, His dealing with His creatures, and the fashion of His redeeming Grace, the possibilities of holiness, the inventiveness of Divine love, His training of the Saints, His guidance of the Church, His inward walk with the souls that seek Him—all these things are written upon Mary like hieroglyphical inscriptions, easily to be deciphered by the light of faith and the intelligent surmises of devotion. So, by her dolours, He has hung about her a complete revelation of the great mystery of suffering. Her sufferings close the mouth of complaint for ever. With sweet constraint and unanswerable persuasiveness they impose silence on all the suffering children of our Heavenly Father. The Saints can doubt no longer that suffering is the one grand

* "Your own poets have told you." Dante Gabriel Rossetti's lines in his *Ave* were written a little later :

Mother of the Fair Delight,
Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight,
Now sitting fourth beside the Three,
Thyself a Woman-Trinity
Being a daughter born to God,
Mother of Christ from stall to Road,
And wife unto the Holy Ghost.

MOTHER OF SORROWS

similitude of Christ. We too in our extreme lowness, whose patience is of so thin a texture that it was threadbare almost when it was new, learn, not to be silent only, but to bear with gentleness, and even wistfully to think the time may come when we shall actually love, that suffering which seems to be the golden coin in which Love repays our love.

DIFFICULTIES

THE delighted admission of the very absoluteness of God's sovereignty over us seems to bring us to a more manifest equality, a more privileged intimacy with Him, than that view of God which represents the relation of Creator and creature as a beautifully just discharge of mutual obligations, wherein He respects the charter He has given us, and we obey His laws as well as His knowledge of our weakness gives Him a right to expect. I have not a word to say of condemnation of that system of theology which endeavours to clear the relationship of Creator and creature of all difficulty, and justifies God to man by representing Him as exercising over us a sort of limited sovereignty which fully satisfies our ideas of perfect equity, such equity as subsists between a powerful monarch and his subjects. But I am quite unable to receive such a system of belief into myself. A controversialist who makes out that there are no difficulties in revelation seems to me to prove too much ; for to say that a disclosure from an Infinite Mind to finite minds is all easy and straightforward is almost to say that there is no such disclosure. or that the one claiming to be so received is not Divine.

DIFFICULTIES

It is indeed an act of love of God, as well as of our neighbour, to make religious difficulties plain ; but he is a bold controversialist who in an age of general intelligence denies the existence of difficulties altogether, or even underestimates their force ; and as the facts on man's side are too obvious to be glossed over, the temptation is almost irresistible to make free with God, and to strive to render Him more intelligible by lowering Him to human notions. In the long run this method of controversy must lead to unbelief. Most men are more satisfied by an honest admission of their difficulty than by an answer to it ; few answers are complete, and common sense will never receive a religion which is represented as having no difficulties. It forfeits its character of being Divine, by making such a claim. Religion, as such, cannot be attractive, unless it is also true ; and when we are sure of the truth, we must not mind its looking unattractive, but trust it, as from God, and therefore, as His, possessed of a secret of success which will carry it securely to its end.

St. Jane Frances Chantal said that she always *hated those sermons* which attempted to prove by natural reason the mystery of the holy and adorable Trinity, and other articles of our Faith ; and that the faithful soul must seek no other reason

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than that sole sovereign universal reason, namely, that God has revealed these things, as far as was needful, to His Church. She never cared to hear of miracles in confirmation of the Faith, nor revelations, and occasionally she made them pass them over while they were reading in the refectory the Lives of the Saints. She resembled in this the great St. Louis of France, who, once when he was called into his private chapel to see some miraculous appearance which had taken place at Mass, refused to go, saying, that he thanked God he believed in the Blessed Sacrament, and should not believe it more firmly for all the miracles in the world, neither did he wish to see one, lest he should thereby forfeit Our Lord's special blessing on those who have not seen and yet have believed. She occasionally said to her nuns, "What have we to do with proofs, miracles, and revelations, unless it be to bless God who has provided them for some who have need thereof? God has revealed to us all that is necessary through His Church."

“ TO SUFFER AND BE STRONG ”

THE law of the Incarnation is a law of suffering. Our Blessed Lord was the man of sorrows, and by suffering He redeemed the world. His Passion was not a mystery detached from the rest of His life, but only the fitting and congruous end of it. Calvary was not unlike Bethlehem and Nazareth. It exceeded them in degree ; it did not differ from them in kind. The whole of the Three-and-Thirty Years was spent in consistent suffering, though it was of various kinds, and not of uniform intensity. This same law of suffering, which belongs to Jesus, touches all who come nigh Him, and, in proportion to their holiness, envelops them, and claims them wholly for itself. The Holy Innocents were, in the counsels of God, simply Our Lord's contemporaries, but that is similitude enough to plunge them in a sea of suffering, and for His sake their fresh lives must bleed away in their distracted mothers' arms, to be followed by eternal crowns and palms : a happy merchandise, a huge fortune swiftly made, and then so marvellously secured ! The same law wound itself round each of the apostles upon whom the indescribably blessed choice of the Incarnate Word had fallen. It was a cross

“ TO SUFFER AND BE STRONG ”

to Peter and his brother, a sword to Paul, hard stones to James, the flaying-knife to Bartholomew, and the boiling oil and the long years of wearisome delay to John. But in whatever shape it came outwardly, inwardly it was always suffering. It went with them into all lands. It overshadowed them in all vicissitudes. It walked with them along the Roman roads, as if it was their guardian angel ; it strode by the side of their uneasy galleys on the stormy waters of the Mediterranean. They were apostles. They must be like their Lord. They must enter into the cloud, and the darkness of the eclipse must fall upon them on the top of some Calvary or other from Rome to Bactria, from Spain to Hindustan.

ii

THE same law has environed the martyrs of all ages. Their passions have been living shadows of the great Passion, and the blood they shed mingled its kindred stream with the Precious Blood of their Redeemer, the King of Martyrs. So with the saints. Whether they have been bishops or doctors, virgins or matrons, seculars or religious, unusual Love and unusual Grace have always reached them in the shape of unusual trial and unusual suffering. They too must be drawn into the cloud, and they will come out of it

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with their faces shining, because they have seen, and seen closely, the Face of the Crucified. It is so in its measure with all the elect. They must stand at least within the fringes of the dark cloud, or it must overshadow them in transit, perhaps more than once, in order to secure the salvation of their souls by giving them at least an adequate likeness to their Lord.

THE UNRULY MEMBER

OUR intercourse with others resolves itself mainly into government of the tongue. I do not know which of these two things is the most astonishing, the unexpected importance of the place assigned to this duty in Holy Scripture, or the utter unconcern which even good men often feel about it. Unless a man takes the Concordance, and looks out in the Bible all the passages which have reference to this subject, from Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus to St. James, he will have no idea of the amount of teaching which it contains on this head, nor the actual quantity of that single volume which it engrosses. Still less will he realise the strength of what inspiration teaches. It is not consistent with the brevity at which I am aiming to enter at length into the subject. It is enough to suggest to each one this single question, Is the amount of scrupulous attention which I am paying to the government of my tongue at all proportioned to that tremendous truth revealed through St. James, that if I do not bridle my tongue, all my religion is in vain? The answer can hardly fail to be both frightening and humbling.

BUT how is the government of the tongue to be practised? The very detailing of the evils will, implicitly at least, suggest the remedies. Listen to an hour of conversation in any Christian company. How much of it turns, almost of necessity as it would seem, on the actions and characters of others! The meaning of judging others appears to be this: the judgement-seat of Our Divine Lord is, as it were, already set up on the earth. But it is empty. It is waiting for Him. We, meanwhile, unmannerly and unbidden, keep ascending the steps, enthroning ourselves upon His seat, and anticipating and mimicking His judgement of our brethren. To put it in this way brings home to us the wretchedness of what we are doing. It will also surely assist us in endeavouring to cleanse our conversation of so much unnecessary canvassing of the motives and actions of others. Yet for the most part we have gone far along our road in devotion, and done ourselves many an irreparable mischief, before we bestow half the carefulness on the government of our tongue, which it not only deserves, but imperiously requires.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

SURELY, if persons living in the world and in society wish to lead a devout life, they should not suppose that a conventual life, diluted and lowered, can be the proper fashion of spirituality for them. From their position and their duties they cannot command their own time, or break up their day into halves or quarters of hours, as if they were in a quiet cloister, and had nothing to do but to follow the chimes of an abbey clock. Hence, in nine cases out of ten, to tell such people that they must draw up a written rule and keep to it, and that the captivity of set times for spiritual drill is their only hope, is as good as telling them that persons living in modern society must not attempt to lead what is called a devout life. How many have given devotion up altogether because they have tried a rule and found they could not keep it! How many have leaned their whole weight upon fixed hours and appointed ways of doing things, upon clockwork and over-division, and have broken down because weak health, or a change of duties, or the interference of domestic vicissitudes have made their fixed hours and stereotyped

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ways impossible? If spirituality is made dry it will never wear. It will crack in a dozen places in a week, like the skin *poncho* of a Patagonian.

SCRUPLES

IT is unfortunate that scrupulous persons are always spoken of with great compassion, far more than they deserve. Hence they elevate their scruples to an interior trial of the soul ; which they sometimes are, but very seldom. It is unfortunate also that in common conversation the word scruple is often used in a good sense, as if it were something respectable, and a sort of vague synonym for conscientiousness. It would, therefore, be a great thing if men could get well into their minds this ascetical truth, that there is nothing respectable about a scruple. It has no intellectual worth. It merits no moral esteem. It has not the faintest element of spiritual good in it. It is simply a perversity and a wrongness, deserving of pity certainly, but of the same kind and amount as we have for a man who is going to be hung.

ii

A SCRUPLE is defined in theology to be a vain fear of sin where there is no reason nor reasonable ground for suspecting sin ; and it is sometimes explained in etymology to mean a stone in a man's shoe which makes him walk lame, and wounds

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him at every step, which is not an inapt figure for expressing its consequences in the spiritual life. We may also compare a scrupulous man to a horse shying at shadows, and so making little progress, backing, disobeying the rein, often endangering the rider, and always trying his temper. Moreover he runs into real sin from startling at the shadow of imaginary sin ; and all this is so connected with pride that the tender St. Philip gave no quarter to scrupulous persons who would not pay blind obedience to the rules given them. Thus scruples are quite distinct from delicacy of conscience, which is known by its not only being reasonable, but much more by its being tranquil ; neither is a scruple the same thing as laxity, but Gerson thinks that it is almost worse.

iii

THERE is quite a consent among Theologians that scrupulous persons are allowed certain privileges. However much there may be of their own fault in what they are now suffering, nevertheless the reality of their suffering entitles them to certain privileges. Philippino the Theatin has written two large folios on the Privileges of Ignorance : it would require no less caution, if a smaller compass, to write on the Privileges of the Scrupulous. These

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privileges, however, are not rights only ; they are obligations also. If they were not so, the invalids for whom they were intended would never dare to use them. The first privilege of scrupulous persons is, that provided they are so instructed by their spiritual guide, it is allowable for them to act even with the fear of sinning while they act. Their second privilege is that they may be sure they have not committed mortal sin, unless, with full advertence, they can reverently swear that they have done so. The reason of this is founded on the impossibility of the will's changing unconsciously in one moment from excessive fear to relaxation of morals. It is true that scruples lead to laxity ; but they neither produce it by an instantaneous change, nor do they introduce it into the subject-matter of the scruple itself. The obligation, which is the counterpart of this privilege, is that they should not confess as mortal sins any such dubious actions, nor abstain from their regular communions on their account. But in order that this privilege should have place, one or more or all of the four following signs should be discerned in the conduct and disposition of the scrupulous person. He should habitually loathe the sin to which he fancies he has consented ; so that it may be clear what the normal state of his will is upon the

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matter. As soon as he caught himself, consciously, delaying on the image of the temptation, he should have made some sort of effort and experienced some disquietude. If he has been thrown into an opportunity of committing the sin, and has not done so, we may argue that his will is sound and whole ; and if he cannot remember whether he was all the while fully aware of the temptations that were besieging him, he is not to be disquieted, but the doubt is to go in his favour. The third privilege of scrupulous persons is that they are not bound to examine matters so exactly as others. Their infirmity is the reason of this. They are spiritual invalids, and the life of an invalid is a life of dispensation, by no less an authority than that of God Himself.

iv

BUT I dare not leave the subject without saying a few words about reasonable scruples. There are such things. Theology leaves no doubt upon the matter, and nothing of what I have said will apply to them. A prudent fear makes a scruple reasonable, just as a vain fear makes it unreasonable. "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently," says the Psalmist. St. Gregory writing to St. Augustine of Canterbury,

SCRUPLES

and St. Clement V. resolving some doubts in the Franciscan rule, admit of these scruples, and teach that they are to be respected. For a man is not rightly called scrupulous who fears and loves God to a nicety, as the saying is, that is, who strives to avoid every venial sin and every least imperfection. The filial feelings of such men and the tranquillity of their solicitude for perfection show that they are not scrupulous in the evil sense. There is such a thing as a wide conscience, and it is wide from the want of reasonable scruples. I only say this to prevent being misunderstood. It were better always to use the word scruple in a bad sense, and to call reasonable scruples by their much truer and more honourable name of conscientiousness. Let not the imperfect be afraid, says St. Augustine, only let them advance. Yet, because I say, do not let them fear, let them not on that account love imperfection, or remain in it when they have found themselves there. Only let them advance as far as in them lies, and all is well. God be praised! we have done little certainly, but all we can, for our scrupulous patients. Now let us leave this close ward, and go out and breathe.

OF UNREALITIES

WHAT I am always complaining of in you spiritual people is your unreality. I suffer, like poor Cassandra, from always making distasteful prophecies to you about this. Now I will go further, and find the same fault of unreality with a very great number of spiritual books. It is taken for granted that every spiritual disease has a cure, not a partial alleviation, not a counterbalancing comfort, not a check which shall hinder its becoming fatal, but an absolute cure, a specific which shall end in a complete restoration to health. I get quite angry with books and sermons for the thoughtless things they say about this. Surely it is a simple untruth. In the matter of bodily health, there are diseases which cannot be cured, wounds which will leave us maimed or lamed to the end of life, constitutional maladies which can be controlled and limited, yet never cured. With such evils we have to content ourselves with medical superintendence, ceaseless physic, a dietary yoke, and the like. Why should we be surprised, at finding similar maladies in the spiritual life? Look at the absurdity of the opposite supposition. You do not surely believe in

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the perfectibility of human nature on this side the grave. You do not expect that you can reach a state of sinlessness before you die, or that your corrupt nature shall become incorruptible, while it is still mortal. In many cases the management of the mischief is our highest attainment. In others the diminution of it is the utmost we can hope. Surely this is the common sense. The other doctrine, besides being nonsense, is a grand source of discouragement, while it also fomenters unreality, and fosters delusions. Spiritual books are, in a great measure, to blame for it. It is so tempting to be systematic, to set off salves against wounds, antidotes against poisons, to look complete, to encourage, to be popular, to exaggerate our inventions, to puff our nostrums. We call this quackery when it is applied to the body. Why does it deserve a kindlier name when it is applied to the soul? The Saints tell us we are to be patient with ourselves to the last. Now to be patient means to endure; it means that some things, if not many things, will remain in self, with which self will have to be patient to the end, that is some things which cannot be cured. The practical man is the man who does the best he can under the circumstances. You must distinguish between incurable and irreparable. I have often told you that no mischief in the

OF UNREALITIES

spiritual life is irreparable ; but I never meant you to understand by that, that there are no evils in the spiritual life which are incurable. I hope you will not forget this distinction. If you do, you will misunderstand many things which it may greatly concern you to understand.

BEFORE A CRUCIFIX

ONE Friday, when it was now near evening, St. Gertrude cast her eyes upon a Crucifix, and, moved with compunction, she cried out, "Ah, my sweetest Creator and Lover, what and how great things didst Thou bear for my salvation to-day, and I, O so unfaithful, have made no account of them, and the day has gone by while I have been occupied with other things. Alas, I have not devoutly called to mind hour after hour that Thou, dear Life that giveth life to all, for the love of my love, hast died!" The Lord from the Crucifix answered her: "What you neglected I have supplied for you; for every hour I gathered into My heart what you ought to have collected in yours; and this has made My heart swell with such an excessive fulness, that I have waited for this hour with great desire that this intention might be made to Me on your part: and now with this intention which you have just made, I will offer to God my Father all that I through the day have supplied for you, because without your own intention it could not be so salutary for you!" "In this we may remark," says St. Gertrude, "the most

BEFORE A CRUCIFIX

faithful love of Jesus for man, which, solely on account of that intention by which He grieves over what he has neglected, amends it all with God the Father, and supplies for all deficiency in such a most lofty way."

THOUGHTS ABOUT SERMONS

HOW few preachers are holy men, and yet without unction what will their sermons be worth? Besides, if the world is, as St. Paul says, to be brought into subjection to Christ by the foolishness of preaching, what is to be done, if by intercession we do not impetrate either earnestness for the preacher, or an unction with his words for the hearer's sake? Eloquence (a plague upon the word when we are talking of Jesus and of souls!) has no gift or benediction. Its harvest is but the preacher's praise and the wasted time of the silly gaping audience. God's blessing is the thing. It is easy to be the popular preacher of a season, the fashionable lion of the Sundays, when the more interesting lions of the week-days are not shown. But—to preach Jesus Christ and Him Crucified—that is another thing. Do you remember the story of that Religious, a Jesuit, I think, who was a famous preacher, and whose sermons converted men by scores? It was revealed to him that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate Lay Brother who sat on the pulpit steps saying Hail Marys all the time for the success of the sermon.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

ONE of the most Divine and striking characteristics of the Catholic religion is the communion of Saints, the way in which everything belongs to everybody, and nobody has any spiritual property of his own. The merits and satisfactions of Our Dear Lord, the joys and woes of Mary, the patience of the martyrs, the perseverance of confessors, and the purity of virgins, they all belong to all of us. Just as the blood circulates from and to the heart all over the body, so in the Church there is no division or separation. Heaven, Purgatory, and earth, it is all one body. We interchange our merit, we circulate our prayers, we pass on our joys, we infect with our troubles, we use each other's satisfactions as they come to hand. We have all sorts of relations with Heaven, and we know exactly how to manage them. As to Purgatory, we have a regular science, and endless practical methods for it, and we are quite at home in them: while on earth kith and kin, blood and country, Jew, Greek, Scythian, bond and free, it is all one.

WE talk of the other world, as if it was a city we were familiar with from long residence ; just as we might talk of Paris, Brussels or Berlin. We are not stopped by death. Sight is nothing to us ; we go beyond it as calmly as possible. We are not separated from our dead. We know the Saints a great deal better than if we had lived with them upon earth. We talk to the Angels in their different choirs as if they were, as they are, our brothers in Christ. We use beads, medals, crucifixes, holy water, indulgences, Sacraments, sacrifices, for all this, as naturally as pen, ink and paper, or axe and saw, or spade and rake, for our earthly work. We have no sort of distrust about the matter. We are all one household, and there is an end of it. The Blessed Lord God is our Father ; His dear majesty is our affair ; our Elder Brother created us, and has our own nature ; Mary is our Mother ; the Angels and the Saints are all the kindest and most familiar of brothers ; so we go up and down stairs, in and out, and to each other's rooms, just as it may be ; there is no constraint about it at all ; the air of the place is simply an intense filial love of the Father whom we all adore : so that our reverence is a children's reverence, and our fear a children's fear.

HOW can they understand this, who live outside the household? Must it not necessarily seem to them a system of human mysteries, an unscriptural fabrication? They are "strangers and foreigners"; how can they divine the ways, the feelings, the sympathies of the "fellow-citizens of the Saints and the domestics of God?" They can read the words, but they can know nothing of the heat and life, the strength and the perception, the health and love which are in them; so that a veil is over their hearts, truly their hearts rather than their understandings, when Paul is read; for they who would understand the edifying of the body of Christ, must first "all meet into the unity of faith," and so needful is this right faith, that it is the "truth," that we "must do the truth in charity in order that we may *in all things* grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, being compactly and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation of the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity." Thus it is that intercessory prayer, practised as a system, persevered in and resorted to by a kind of instinct, has always been almost a note of the Church.

OF TEPIDITY

YOU cannot stand aloof from the cause of Jesus on earth, and even keep up a sort of armed neutrality with God when you desire as soon as ever you die, without so much as tasting the sharpness of Purgatory, to be locked in His closest embrace of unutterable love for evermore. Yet this is the plain English of the lives of most Catholics. Can anything be more unreasonable, more ungenerous, more mean? Yet you wonder we have not converted England! Verily we do not look like a people who have come to kindle a fire upon the earth, nor to be pining because it is not kindled. Ah Jesus, these are Thy worst wounds! I think lightly of the ruddy scars of Thy hands and feet, of the bruised knee and the galled shoulder, of the thousand-wounded head and the wide-open heart. But these wounds—the wounds of coldness, neglect, unpraying selfishness—the wounds of the few that were once fervent and now are tepid, of the multitudes that never were fervent, and so cannot even claim the odious honours of tepidity, the wounds wherewith Thou wert wounded in the house of Thy friends, these are the wounds to be wiped

OF TEPIDITY

with our tears, and softened with the oil of our affectionate compassion. Blessed Lord, I can hardly believe Thou art what I know Thou art, when I see Thy people wound Thee thus. But my own wretched heart ! It, too, lets me into sad secrets about man's capability of coldness, and his infinity of ingratitude. Alas, the concluding chapters of the four Gospels—they read like a bitter jest upon the Faithful.

AGAINST SELF-DECEIT

DOWN in the caverns of self the air is close, and all things are damp, mouldy, and decaying. A soul turned inward upon itself is mostly mildewed. An ailing self is a nauseous thing, the more repulsive the nearer we come to it, the more offensive the more we handle it. Moreover, all things turn to delusion ! Prayer, Sacraments, mortifications, sallies of Divine love, things in themselves fresh as the leaping cataracts in the cool wood or on the breezy cliff, all turn or may easily turn to something diseased and unpleasant when they are imbedded in our spiritual life. I do not wonder that intellectual men, men of robust character, men of successful activity and men of energetic physical health, have such a mingled horror and contempt of what is called the spiritual life. Nevertheless everything is right in its own place. Patients are better in a hospital than on the top of Ben Nevis. Fresh air, bright summits, dashing waters, aromatic pines, dewy fern, and crisp heather belong to the next world of spirituality, not to this one.

ii

SHALL we ever be real? Shall we ever put off this teasing, clinging falsehood, which adheres to all we do, and say, and suffer, and are? Our souls manage to disentangle themselves out of our bodies; but it is a sharp process. Perhaps the process of extricating ourselves out of the meshes of self-deceit will not only be like that other process, but may be nothing less than a part of it. If we look at what is practically success, then self-deceit may be regarded as curable. If we look at absolute success, there is no cure for it short of death, which is obviously an extinction rather than a cure. The knowledge that self-deceit is never completely overcome only makes us pine the more for Heaven, and for the far-off springs of everlasting truthfulness. Earth cannot do all the work. Something must still be done beyond the grave, or in the act of descending into it.

iii

THERE are certainly some natures which expand in the sunshine, some characters which undo their folds and uncrease themselves in the presence of strong heat and bright light. With such persons joy seems to unlock the heart like wine, and a heart that has been once

opened is not soon closed again. Joy has even sanctified some souls altogether. But this is not the common lot, nor would it have that effect on the multitude of men. Joy suits admirably those whom it suits at all ; but sorrow suits the greater number. We are all of us no doubt indebted to joy for many bright thoughts of God ; and certainly he, whose thoughts about God are the brightest, will suffer least from self-deceit in the long run, though he will have varieties of self-deceit peculiar to himself. Let us grant, then, that with some men, and those more numerous perhaps than is generally supposed, joy does more than sorrow. Hortatory books will not concede this to us ; but of course it is their profession to be dismal, and we will assume it in spite of them. Nevertheless the delivery from self-deceit is not among the gifts of joy. Even when it seems to help us to serve God better, and not only seems but actually does so, it hides from ourselves our own poverty of pure disinterested love.

iv

WHAT then will make us real ? The Face of God will do it. The first kingly touch of eternity will not only wake us, but it will heal us also. Self-deceit is the king's evil of the soul, and the Sovereign's

hand alone can cure it. The self-knowledge flashed upon us by the glance of Jesus at the judgement will in one moment un-clothe the soul of all untruthfulness, and clothe it in its vesture of immortal truth. The utter self-abasement caused in us by the ravishing beauty of the Godhead will be the ultimate truth of our created natures. Clearly, then, the nearest approach to this which is possible on earth will be our best defence against self-deceit ; and the nearest approach to it is the serving God out of personal love. Love, not all love, but Divine love, has a speciality to make us real. Communion with God eats away our unreality, something after the fashion of a Sacrament. We catch simplicity as part of the likeness of Jesus ; and it is His likeness which love fastens on. When we look out of ourselves in loving faith, our inward processes are fewer in number, and amazingly simplified. But their majesty is only enhanced by their simplicity.

“ LIFE IS VERY SWEET, BROTHER ”

ALL this wailing about the wretchedness of the world is but the threadbare pathos of an old-fashioned pastoral. It is worn out. No one is moved by it, unless indeed it makes men bad by irritating their common sense against religion, which has no ally half so valuable as common sense. The fact is, the world is a very bright world, and, all things considered, an extremely satisfactory world, so far as comfort is concerned. The wonder is, nay the misery is, that it can be so comfortable when it is so sinful. However, the practical fact is that in these days nobody believes the other view. They taste the world, and smack their lips ; for it is very sweet. If the world was so obviously miserable, moralists would be spared the trouble of their exhortations.

ii

IN truth, the moralists themselves do not believe their own teaching. Look at them. They utter their lamentations, and enjoy themselves. It is the ascetics who are right, and not the moralists. For the ascetics admit the charms of the world, and are timid and nervous

“ LIFE IS VERY SWEET, BROTHER ”

about them. They say of the wickedness of the world, what moralists say of its wretchedness. They are dismayed by its attractiveness. This is the true view, and even the man of the world admits the truth of it in his heart. Some day that heart may be softened by a sense of the world's wickedness, while it is only hardened now by the preaching of the world's wretchedness. Out of God all is unreal. Away from God all is untrue. Untruthfulness is the condition of the creature. How painfully we feel, when we are at our best estate, and even better people than ourselves when they are at their best estate, that we are helplessly pretentious, indeliberate unrealities, unintentional hypocrisies ! It is a sober cheer, that the time will come to all of us, when we shall play parts no more, neither with others, nor with ourselves, nor yet with God.

THE WAYS OF JOY AND SORROW

SORROW is the substance of man's natural life, and it might almost be defined to be his natural capability of the supernatural. Joy is but a thin shade, except when it is in alternation with sorrow. The power of art is in the sorrowful. No poetry finds its way into a nation's mind, or can dwell there, unless it have a burden of sorrow in it. To glorify sorrow is one of the highest functions of song, of sculpture, or of painting. Nothing has a lasting interest for men which is not in some way connected with sorrow. All that is touching, pathetic, dramatic, in man's life has to do with sorrow. Sorrow is the poetry of a creation which is fallen, of a race which is in exile, in a vale of tears closed in at the end by the sunless defile of death. Religion has rather added to all this than taken from it. Our sorrow is now more purely sorrow since gloom and despair have been chased away from it. We have been redeemed by sorrow. The mysteries of Our Lord are chiefly mysteries of sorrow. Our Lady is the Mother of woes. The offices and ceremonies of the Church incline rather to be pensive than to be triumphant. Joy on earth is confessedly

for a time. It rises out of sorrow, and it falls back upon it again. All devotion has an element of softness in it, which, if it is not sorrow, is at least akin to it and congenial to it. Sympathy is the bond of hearts, and all sympathy has some of the blood of sorrow in its veins. While joy often jars upon our spirits, sorrow hardly ever seems misplaced, even when it is unwelcome.

ii

THE old mystics spoke of two kinds of men, the solar and the lunar. Some were in occult sympathy with the sun, and were ruled by its mysterious influences. Their temperament and their intellect bore some analogy to the character of the sun. Their power of working, their way of work, and the kind of work they chose, were all under the influence of his sovereign beam. Their very diseases were supposed to arise from some malignity of the solar ray, which settled by preference on certain members of the body rather than others. Then there were others who went through life almost as if there were no sun, or at least who quietly used its material light, as a lamp which Providence had placed at their disposal. But they were under equal subjection to the moon, and her wayward beam of cold nocturnal silver played upon their sensitive

frames and their responsive souls, as the winds play upon an æolian harp. So there are men in the world who are better for joy, who are humbled by its sweetness, and expand under its shining; and on the other hand there are men who are better for sorrow, and to whom it is the altogether necessary atmosphere of goodness. These last outnumber the first by many millions. The souls, whom joy nurtures in holiness, are so completely the exceptional cases, that for the multitude of hearers or of readers we may speak as if all men were at home with sorrow, and lived with it as with their guardian angel.

iii

THERE are some men to whom sorrow teaches all things and to whom also sorrow is the sole revelation. They can only learn by sorrow. They do not understand any other language. They are not capable of taking in any other experience. What is clear as light they cannot see, until the shadow of sorrow has fallen upon it. We come across these men daily on our way through life. There are others who go further than this. They are men who can only work in the shade of some supposed impending catastrophe. They feel always that they are walking into a darkness and down a gulf, and the belief cheers

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them, and the darkness recedes and the gulf travels backwards, but their idea of them both is the mainspring of their activity and power. Others, who can do without sorrow in other things, cannot do without it in their religion. It becomes to them their fear, their reverence, and their love. It is the fountain of their devotion, and the stimulus of their duty. They find sorrow in all the mysteries of Jesus, no matter how joyful or glorious they may be. Sorrow is the condition of all their heavenly mindedness. Sorrow converted them; sorrow perfects them; sorrow is their final perseverance.

iv

THERE are some who have said that joy is a more shallow thing than sorrow. Surely this is not a just view to take of God's creation, even since the fall. Truly joy is undermost, and sorrow is uppermost; but from this very cause joy is the deeper of the two. The heart of the spiritual world, where its central fires are, is deepest joy. The world of sorrow rests upon it, as on its secure foundation. As under every stone there is moisture, so under every sorrow there is joy; and when we come to understand life rightly, we see that sorrow is after all but the minister of joy. We dig into the bosom of

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sorrow to find the gold and precious stones of joy. Sorrow is a condition of time, but joy is the condition of eternity. All sorrow lies in exile from God ; all joy lies in union with Him. In Heaven joy will cast out sorrow, whereas there is not a lot on earth from which sorrow has been able altogether to banish joy. Joy clings to us as the creatures of God. It adheres to us wherever we go. Its fragrance is palpable about us. Its sunshine lights upon us, and gives us some sort of attractiveness above that which is our own. Joy hangs about everything which God has had to do with. There is only one place where there is no joy, and that dark region is under a special law of its own, and is darkness because it would not be light. There is an inevitable joyousness about all that belongs to God.

V

WE are angry with ourselves because we do not sorrow long enough for our dead. We think it almost a wrong to the memory of those we loved. But it is the elasticity of life. Our hearts bound upwards because God is above. We cannot help ourselves. The very purling of our blood in our veins is joyous, because life is a gift direct from God. In truth joy and sorrow are not contradictories. Sorrow is the setting of joy, the foil of joy, the shadow

which softens joy, the gloom which makes the light so beautiful, the night which causes each morning to have the gladness of a resurrection. They live together, because they are sisters. Joy is the eldest-born, and when the younger dies, as she will die, joy will keep a memory of her about her for evermore, a memory which will be very gracious, so gracious as to be part of the bliss of Heaven.

vi

JOY is like a missionary who speaks of God ; sorrow is a preacher who frightens men out of the deadliness of sin into the arms of their heavenly Father, or who weans them by the pathos of his reasoning from the dangerous pleasures of the world. These bright hearts are more like the first than the second. They have a great work to do for God ; and they do it often most when they realise it least. It is the breath they breathe, and the star they were born under, and the law which encircles them. They have a light within them, which was not delusive when they were young, and which age will only make more golden without diminishing its heat. To live with them is to dwell in a perpetual sunset of unboisterous mirth and placid gaiety. Who has not known such souls ? Who has not owed all that is best

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in him, after Grace, to such as those? Happy is he who had such for the atmosphere of his parental home! Its glory may have sunk beneath the horizon: but he himself will be illuminated by its glow until the hour comes for his own pensive setting. Of a truth he is the happiest, the greatest, and the most godlike of men, as well as the sole poet among men, who has added one true joy to the world's stock of happiness.

DIGNITY IN SORROW

WHAT then shall we think of that characteristic of Mary's dolours which so amazed St. Bernard, the moderation with which she bore them? Who is ever able to forget, when they meditate upon our Blessed Mother, the heavenly tranquillity of her "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," at the Annunciation? The same tranquillity is unbroken even when her heart is breaking beneath the Cross. Except in the case of very high sanctity, and even there the exception does not always hold, moderation in sorrow would imply something like coldness or insensibility. We should hardly love very tenderly any one, the even tenor of whose way deep affliction could not disturb. In the case of the Saints the love of God acts as a counter-charm to the spells of sorrow. It at once distracts and compensates, and so makes endurance easier. But with Mary it was just in her love of God that the exceeding bitterness of her agony consisted.

YET there was no wildness, no loud sighs, no broken sobs, no outspoken words of complaint. Still less—the thought is one which would never have crossed the mind of an intelligent lover of Mary, if careless untheological pictures had not indecorously brought it before so many of us—still less were there any vehement attitudes of grief, any contortions of the venerable beauty of her face, any womanish wringing of the hands, any negligence of dishevelled hair, any prostrations on the ground as of one overcome with mortal anguish, least of all any fainting away, any need of a supporting arm around her, whether it were that of John or Magdalen, any suspension of that glorious reason which sleep even had not interrupted in its magnificent exercises since the very first moment of the Immaculate Conception. Let us in indignant love give to the flames these ignorant dishonourable representations, and drive out of ourselves the odious images which their skill and beauty may have left upon our minds. Mary “*stood*” beneath the Cross: that is the simple grandeur of the scriptural picture, which represented the actual truth, and whose artist was her own Spouse, the Holy Ghost. Never then must we put away from ourselves the thought

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of this moderation of Mary in her woes. There was nothing wild, nothing unsettled, nothing dramatic, nothing passionate, nothing demonstrative, nothing excessive ; but she stood in calmest queenliest dignity quiet, not as a sweet evening landscape, or a noontide summer sea, or a green wood at dawn, or a moonlit mountain-top, or as any other image in the poetry of nature, but quiet, in her measure and degree, as the Divine Nature of Our Lord while the tumult of the Passion was trampling His Human Nature to death.

COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED

THE pains, which the human frame has to bear from various ailments, are terrible in their number, their variety, and the horror which attaches to many of them: over this empire, which original sin has created, how feeble and how limited is the jurisdiction of medical science! Yet what could philanthropy do for bodily pain, except surround it with medical appliances and with physical comforts? Let us not underrate the consolation of the large-minded wisdom, the benevolent common-sense, and the peculiar priestly kindness of an intelligent physician. It is very great. Neither let us pretend to make light of the alleviations of an airy room, of a soft bed, of well-prepared food, of a low voice and a noiseless step, and of those attentions which are beforehand with our irritability by divining our wants at the right moment. Nevertheless, when the daily pressure of bodily pain goes on for weeks and months, when all life, which is not illness, is but a vacillating convalescence, what adequate or abiding consolation can we find, except in supernatural things, in the motives of the faith, in union with Jesus, in that secret experimental knowledge of God which makes us at times find chastisement so sweet?

EVERY heart knows its own bitterness. That part of a mental sorrow, which can be expressed, is generally the part which rankles least. The suffering of it depends mainly on feelings which belong to individual character, feelings which can hardly be stated, and which, if stated, could not be appreciated, even if they were not altogether misunderstood. Who has not often wondered at the almost invariable irritation produced in unhappy persons by set and formal soothing? There is a pity in the tone of voice which wounds rather than heals. The very composure of features aggravates us by making us feel more vividly the reality of our grief. We have long since exhausted for ourselves all the available topics of consolation. Not in gradual procession, but all at once like a lightning's flash, all the motives and wisdoms, which occupy my unsuffering friend an hour to enumerate, were laid hold of, fathomed, and dismissed, by my heart, which suffering had awakened to a speed and power of sensitiveness quite incredible. Job is not the only person who has been more provoked by his comforters than by his miseries.

EVEN the daily wear and tear of our hearts in common life cannot be reached by outward consolation, unless that consolation comes from above, and is Divine. Philanthropy, with the best intentions, can never get inside the heart. There are sufferings there too deep for anything but religion either to reach or to appreciate ; and such sufferings are neither exceptional nor uncommon. There are few men who have not more than one of them. If we take away the great sorrow upon Calvary, how dark and how unbearable a mystery does all sorrow become !

AGAINST LEVITY

PARTICULARLY we must be upon our guard against the mistake of thinking it uncatholic to take serious and religious views of things. Converts are very liable to this from the ordinary laws of reaction and recoil. So also are Priests, Seminarists and Religious, as thinking seriousness professional. Levity will not make us happy, and I never read the life of a Saint who thought it fine to speak lightly, or who was given to do so. They said little, and what they said was invariably grave. I believe it was their gravity that made them cheerful. There is something undergraduate about this levity. It is partly the conceit and partly the vulgarity of the spiritual life.

OF LOQUACITY

THOMAS `A KEMPIS says that he never returned to his cell after a conversation, without entering it a worse man than he had left it ; and another holy person said that he never in his life had repented of holding his tongue, whereas he had rarely ever spoken without being sorry for it afterwards. What an insight this gives us into the very core of a Saint's life ! In spirituality when the tired soul seeks some undue vent or recreation, there is no relief, except castle-building, more dangerous than loquacity ; and it is one of the commonest of temptations. Some are tempted to be loquacious with everybody who will be a listener ; others only with certain people, who are sympathetic, and with whom to exchange sentiments is to rest their minds. Others are only tempted to talk at wrong times and on wrong subjects ; and this is sometimes from the devil, and sometimes from the human spirit. As a general maxim it may be laid down, that in a spiritual person all effusion of heart is undesirable, except to God, and that it is equally undesirable whether it be about God or about some indifferent subject. There is

OF LOQUACITY

nothing to choose between them. The evil is in the effusion. We fancy it relieves us in temptation. But there never was a greater mistake. With the exception of certain temptations, silence braces us up, where effusion weakens and enervates us. Pious people, before they begin to be Saint-like, are notably loquacious ; and it is often loquacity which retards the hour when the likeness of the Saints will pass upon them, or frustrates the process altogether.

DEVOTIONS

ANY special drawing in devotion is a great gift from God. It is one of the most powerful of all the secret influences of the spiritual life. It is therefore of great importance to a man not to mistake or overlook such a heavenly attraction. Such a mistake is like a man's missing his vocation. Every man doubtless has a vocation, so every spiritual man has a devotional attraction, or a succession of them. For a spiritual man is one who dwells inwardly in the supernatural world, amid God's mysteries and revealed grandeurs. He is not a mere tourist who is struck by the sublime or the picturesque of theology, and admires the scenery as a whole, and has not such a familiarity with it as to enable him to break it up into separate landscapes, nor time to brood tranquilly over any of them so as to have a rational predilection for them. He dwells in the world of theology. He is like one whose fixed abode is in grand scenery. He sees it in the morning light and in the sunset's glow. He is familiar with it in the vicissitudes of storm and calm. He cannot help having preferences. Predilections are almost a necessity to him. Or at least he

DEVOTIONS

must honour, like a true poet, each coming season with an admiration which seems, if it only seems, to do injustice to the season that is past, like the souls who in devotion follow the Calendar of the Church, and honour most the feast under whose shadow they are sitting. So it must be to those to whom the supernatural world is a genuine home. Their life is a life of loves, and therefore of predilections also.

ii

ALL spiritual souls are thus haunted Asouls. They see sights which others do not see, and hear sounds which others do not hear. This haunting is to them their own secret prophecy of Heaven. It would be sad to miss so choice a Grace by inattention, sadder still to follow a fantastic delusion of earth instead of the heavenly reality. The sour cannot hear God unless it listens for Him, and listening is the devoutest attitude of a wise and loving soul. Yet they who listen hear many sounds which others do not hear, many sounds for which they themselves are never listening. There are false sounds on earth, which have a trick of Heaven in them. They are like the phantom bells that ring for vespers, as from viewless convents, in the wilderness of Zin. Yet the Bedouin deems that, with his practised ear,

he can discern their thin tolling from the real sounds of the sandy solitude. The avoiding of delusion is not the whole of safety in the spiritual life. There is more danger in missing a Grace from God, than in mistaking an earthly beckoning for a Divine. For in the last case purity of intention soon rectifies the error, while in the other the loss is for the most part irretrievable. Even in the natural life, and in the spiritual life much more, they are the most unfortunate of men, who linger behind their lot. They are like those who loiter behind the desert caravan. Straightway, as Marco Polo tells us, a shadowy voice calls them by their name, and allures them to one side of the route. They follow, and still it calls, and when they have wandered from the path, a mocking silence follows, more terrible than the deceiving voice.

DISORDERED HEALTH A CAUSE OF DISTRACTION IN DEVOTION

BY disordered health I do not so much mean actual illness, when in all probability ejaculatory acts of love, of patience, and of conformity, will form the whole of the sufferer's prayer, with a constant quiet eye on his Crucifix or some other emblem of the Passion. I rather mean the valetudinarian state which is now so very common, with its distinguishing bodily feebleness, and daily tendency to slight headache, especially when, as is often the case, the feeling of fatigue is greatest at first rising in the morning. With many persons this is so distressing that they are quite unable to make a morning meditation. In these cases bodily strength is wanting to keep off or to banish distractions. The greater the effort made, the greater will the vehemence of the distractions be, and the result of a violent effort will be an inability to pray at all. Such persons must be quiet and tranquil, and try to keep God's presence lovingly before them with gentleness and without scruple. It will seem to themselves that they do not pray at all, and that their attempts are so many

constellations of venial sins. But this is really very far from being the case. They must take the annoyance as they would any other consequence of ill-health, and learn humility in its endurance. If they are quiet they will have a spot within where there is peace, even while distractions are raging without; but, if they make vehement and ill-advised efforts, they will only surrender to the distractions of that inward sanctuary also.

GOD'S NEED OF US

IF we consider the arrangements of creation and natural preservation, we shall see that they in like manner testify to the Creator's desire to excite our love. It is impossible to make too much of the fact that both angels and men were created in a state of Grace. The more we think of it, the more we see that it is a complete revelation in itself. Then again there is a sort of superabundance in our natural gifts. We have so many more than seem absolutely necessary to our discharging the duties for which we came into the world. Life is itself an intense pleasure ; so much so that men prize it above all other things. The most miserable of men will hardly part without reluctance with the simple power of living. All our natural gifts also are so constructed as to be avenues of enjoyment and delight. There is not a sense, in whose exercise there is not a keenness and a peculiarity of satisfaction, of which those who lack that sense, can form no adequate conception. It requires a soul, either in the strength of its first integrity or in the vigour of supernatural Grace, to hold us back from being swept away by the might of sensual pleasure.

THE exercise of the various faculties of the mind also opens out new sources of the strangest delight and the most thrilling happiness. We can think of and count up a score of different pleasurable feelings consequent on the use of our minds, not one of which we can adequately describe in words. What then shall we say of the romance and nobility of the affections of our hearts, those very hearts God so much covets? Almost as many loves grow in the soil of the heart, as there are wines in the vineyards of the earth: and has not the whole world many a time gone wild with their intoxication? So also in the adaptation of material nature to our dominion, everything is characterised by excessive profusion, by unnecessary beauty. Everything almost has a sweetness beyond and beside its own proper function. The heathen talked of Mother Earth; and truly God has filled her teeming bosom with the milk of more than a mother's kindness. Whether she feeds, or heals, or soothes, or inspires, or simply wins us by the lustre of her physical beauty, she is ever doing more than she promises, and enhances her gifts by the fondness of her ministrations. There is something to make us tremble to see with what fineness of balance, with what nicety of restraint, our Creator

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tames the huge elements in our behalf, and makes us live at ease amid the bewildering vastness of their operations, and close by the uneasy laboratories of their titanic power. Everywhere, and for our sakes, He governs, not through the catastrophes of violent power, but through the meekness of a patient and a pleasant uniformity. Here is fresh demonstration that He craves our love, and no reason given but the blessed one of His free benignant will.

iii

ONCE more, before we leave the Kingdom of nature, let us look at the way in which the Bible discloses Him to us in successive dispensations. He plants an Eden for His new-made creatures, and then comes to them Himself, and the evenings of the young world are consecrated by familiar colloquies between the creatures and their Creator. He tests their love by the lightest of precepts ; and when they have broken it, clear above the accents of a strangely moderate anger are heard the merciful promises of a Saviour. Then comes centuries of mysterious strife, like Jacob wrestling with God by the tinkling waters of the midnight stream. No sin seems to weary Him. No waywardness is a match for the perseverance of His love. Merciful and miraculous interventions are never

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wanting. No gifts are thought too much or too good, if the creatures will but condescend to take them. On the Mesopotamian sheep-walks, in the Egyptian brick-fields, in the palm spotted wilderness, among the vineyards of Engaddi, by the headlong floods of harsh Babylon, it is always the same. God cannot do without us. He cannot afford to lose our love. He clings to us ; He pleads with us ; He punishes only to get love, and stays His hand in the midst ; He melts our hearts with beautiful complainings ; He mourns like a rejected lover or a suspected friend ; He appeals to us with a sort of humility which has no parallel in human love.

OVER-DIRECTION

WHY ask more of our spiritual than of our bodily physician? The office is analogous, though the subject matter is so different. Let us use our director thus, and then see what blessings we have: safety, victory, inward peace, the merit of obedience, and a good man's prayers. I have seen a geranium brought up from the cellar when the springtime came. It had been a mild winter, and in the warm darkness it had grown an unwholesome growth! It hung down like a creeper, with lanky whitish-yellow shoots, and miserable jaundiced leaves. The growth had been abundant; and it would not be true to say that the abundance was the only good point about it; for it was the worst point of it all. There was but one course. It was cut down, planted out, and flowered the latest of its brethren that year, and very poorly after all. Such is the soul that has been over-directed; and the springtime is eternity. Alas! in that matter there comes the cutting down, but there cannot come the planting out. I never knew or read of any one who had a director, and then who suffered because he was too little directed. The souls damaged by over-direction would fill a hospital in any decently large town.

PATIENCE WITH GOD

PATIENCE with God. The very word sounds strange. Let it not breed familiar or irreverent thought. It is a very serious question, and must be approached with the profoundest respect, remembering of what an infinite majesty and unfathomable condescension it is, of which with all abasement we are venturing to speak. Again and again I have said, it is an awful thing to have dealings with Almighty God. His favours are our fears. Yet let us think of this with the intensest filial and confiding love. God condescends to try our patience, who are dust and ashes, in various ways ; and some of them are peculiar, or belong chiefly to the spiritual life. He tries us by His hiddenness and by the impenetrable obscurity in which He shrouds almost all His supernatural processes, both in the Sacraments and out of them. As the Bible says, He is a God who conceals Himself. If we could see Him, so we say, then cheerfully would we follow Him ! Were we but sure it was He ! But we cannot see Him. Often He could not show Himself to us, if He would. That is, His mercy could not, for the sight would slay us. Darkness is good for us when light

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would blind us. But look over the exercises, the trials, the temptations, and the vicissitudes of the spiritual life, and what a gain it seems as if it would be to us, could we only see Him ! It is not so. It is best as it is. The enigma is our life. We must be patient with it. Sometimes He condescends to look mutable and fickle. He lets the moon amid the driving clouds of night be His emblem. He entices us into a road, and then leaves us just where it branches into two. He shows His face and then He hides it. We see it for a moment, and it is gone before we have caught the expression of it. Or the light so pleased us, we did not look at the dark objects it was meant to enlighten.

ii

WHY does He interweave His bright and dark with us so perpetually? Sometimes He puzzles us as to His will. He lets half words fall into our hearts. He sends us what look like leadings, and are not so. He feigns, as Our Lord did when He made as if He would pass the boat that stormy night on the water. He lets us think that He has contradicted Himself, He who is eternal truth, unchangeable simplicity. He looks as though He were entrapping us, getting us to commit ourselves to Him, and then reproaching us, and going away

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as if we had offended Him, or changing His mien, and throwing us into prison and making slaves of us, as if in contempt of our generosity, as if our best were an insult to Him, as it would be but for the infiniteness of His amazing compassion. One while He is the most indulgent of fathers, another while the least forbearing of masters : now the most patient of teachers, and again the sharpest of critics : here the most gracious of sovereigns, there the most exacting of despots : now almost a plaintiff to our human hearts, and again the most vindictive of persecutors. Look as Thou wilt, most gracious Lord ! nothing of Thee will we believe but that Thou art an infinitely good God, in Thy wrath remembering mercy, and as unchangeably a Father as Thou art eternally a God !

PATIENCE WITH SELF

THERE are various means by which we may cultivate patience with ourselves. Frequent meditation on our own nothingness is a great help to it ; and on especial dwelling upon any meanness and vileness and deceit of our past lives, the reconsideration of which can be attended with no danger because of the intrinsic disgust and cutting shame which the details of such meanness awake within us. When we hear of some great crime, we may consider that we might have done it ourselves, or perhaps worse, were it not for Grace. We must be careful also at confession, and in preparing for it, not to mistake self-vexation for real contrition : and then we may persevere in asking for patience in a special way after Communion. We must try, it is very hard, but time wins its way through hard things, to rejoice in all encounters which show us our need of Grace, and the possibility of dreadful sins which we always carry about with us. Neither must we be in a hurry to forget past sins, and to force our way into the sunshine. If God gives us quite a depressing sense of sin, let us cherish it and stagger on beneath the burden. Blessed is any

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weight, however overwhelming, which God has been so good as to fasten with His own hand upon our shoulders. In a word, patience with self is almost a condition of spiritual progress ; and St. Catherine of Genoa is its Patron Saint.

MORTIFICATIONS

UNDER the head of interior mortifications comes, first of all, the mortification of our own judgement, or *razionale*, as St. Philip called it. Can there be a harder task in the whole of our spiritual life! If you ask me how it is to be done, I answer—the words are easy, not so the practice—Distrust your own opinion, and acquire the habit of surrendering it in doubtful things. In matters about which you are clear, speak modestly and then be silent. Try never to have an opinion contrary to that of your natural and immediate superiors. Let their presence be the death of your own views. With your equals try to agree in matters of no moment and above all, have no wish to be listened to. Judge favourably of all things, and be ingenious in giving them a kindly turn. Condemn nothing either in the general or the particular, but make all things over to the judgement of God. When reason and virtue oblige you to speak, do so with such gentleness and want of emphasis that you may seem rather to despise than value your own opinion.

MORTIFICATIONS

ii

BUT if mortification has its difficulties, it has its dangers also. Many mortifications are preceded by Vain-glory, who blows the trumpet before them. Other mortifications she accompanies ; and some even receive from her all their life, animation, and perseverance. The remedy for this is to put all our mortifications under obedience. It is difficult then for either vain-glory, ostentation, singularity, affectation, wilfulness or indiscretion to fasten upon our penances and corrode their precious inward life : and they are the six chief dangers of mortification. Neither must we forget to be on our guard against a superstitious idea of the value of pain growing up in our minds alongside of our austerities. Many mortifications remain mortifications when the pain of them has passed away ; and the value of them depends upon the intensity of the supernatural intention that was in them, not on the amount of physical pain or bodily discomfort. Mortification is a putting something to death, and the passion that is dead already is more mortified than one that is only dying ; and yet the last feels pain, while the first is past all feeling. It is astonishing how many are unconsciously deceived by this superstitious notion of the value of the mere pain ; not

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that it is without value ; but it is not the gem ; it is only the setting of it.

iii

IT is this error which has given so much vogue outside the Church, and sometimes also to unwary persons in it, to the delusion of thinking that perfection consists in always doing what we dislike, which implies that our affections and passions will never be brought to like the things of God or be in harmony with Grace. Thus you hear of persons having a scruple whether they ought to be kind to others because they have so much sensible pleasure in it, or visiting the poor for the same reason, or following a peculiar bent of devotion. Some even impose it as a rule upon the souls they guide : in almost every instance, with as much absurdity as indiscretion. In the only sense in which sound mysticism would allow of such a maxim, it would require a special and clearly marked vocation, and it would be as rare as the call to make St. Teresa's and St. Andrew Avellino's vows, always to do what was most perfect. Yet the Church stopped at those vows when she was called upon to canonise the Saints, and would not proceed till evidence was given her of a special operation of the Holy Ghost. No one ever became a Saint, or

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anything like one, by ceasing to cultivate the sweeter parts of his character or his natural virtues, because the doing it was so great a pleasure. Yet Jansenism thought that the secret of perfection lay in this single charm. It is a most odious and uncatholic idea of asceticism.

THANKS

AMONG other promises which God made to St. Gertrude this was one : "Whenever any one devoutly praises God, and gives Him thanks for the blessings conferred upon Gertrude, the Almighty mercifully wills to enrich him with as many spiritual Graces as he offers thanksgivings, if not at the present time, at least on some fitting occasion." In like manner Orlandini tells us that Peter Faber used to be continually congratulating the Angels and the blessed on their gifts, assiduously pondering the particular Graces God had given them, and then separately, for each of them, naming those he could, with great emotion he gave God thanks for them on their behalf. He practised this devotion, until at last he came to feel as if there was not a single token of the Divine goodness shown to any one, for which he was not personally a debtor. He made himself a kind of vicar for every one who had any sort of happiness or success, and no sooner did he perceive it, than he set to work to bless God, and to give thanks. There was nothing joyous, nothing prosperous, that he saw or heard of, but he at once became its voice of

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praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Nay, fair cities, fruitful fields, beautiful olive-grounds, delightful vineyards,—he looked round upon them with exulting eye, and because they could not speak for themselves, he spoke for them, and thanked the Lord of all for their beauty, and in the name of their owners and possessors, for the dominion which He had given them thereof.

ii

HOW wonderful must have been the interior of this holy Father's soul, decked with such various and surpassing gifts, enriched with such very peculiar, and, so to speak, private Graces, and above all, with a dower of *interior dispositions*, which was his special characteristic treasure and wherein hardly any canonised Saint seems to surpass him. No wonder St. Francis Xavier added him to the litany of the Saints, or that St. Francis of Sales speaks of his joy and consolation at consecrating an altar in the good Father's native village in Savoy. Yet, like Balthazar Alvarez, whom St. Teresa saw in vision higher in glory than all his contemporaries, though there were many canonised among them, so Peter Faber is not raised upon the altars of the Church, but rests in God's bosom as one of His hidden Saints.

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Blessed be the Most Holy Trinity for every gift and Grace that ever beautified his soul, and for all the treasures of Grace which God has given to his Saints, and now keeps hidden in Himself, so that we cannot glorify Him for them !

iii

WE are bound to offer continual thanksgivings for the multitude of personal blessings which we ourselves have received from the unmerited goodness of God. How beautifully St. Bernard expresses this in his first sermon on the Canticles. " In the wars and conflicts," says he, " which at no hour are wanting to those who live devoutly in Christ, whether from the flesh, the world, or the devil, for man's life is a warfare on the earth, as you have all experienced in yourselves—in all these conflicts we must daily renew our songs of gratitude for the victories already obtained. As often as a temptation is overcome, or a vice subdued, or an imminent danger avoided, or a snare of the evil one discovered in time, or an old inveterate passion of the soul healed, or a virtue long coveted and prayed for, at length by the gift of God granted to us, what must we do but, according to the Prophet, utter the voice of praise and thanksgiving, and bless God at each single blessing for all His gifts ?

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Else, when the last day comes, he will be reckoned among the ungrateful, who cannot say, 'Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage.' Nay, at every advance we make, according to the ascensions which each has disposed in his heart, so many separate songs must we sing to the praise and glory of Him who has thus promoted us."

iv

PRAYER can teach us to depend on God, and answered prayer to trust in Him. But Infinite Goodness will not let us rest on such terms with Him. We are to be with Him to all eternity ; He is to be our everlasting joy ; to know Him and to love Him is life ; and the love of Him is the joyful praise of Him for ever. As the spirit of oblation, the permission to make God presents, at once brings in a dearer and more familiar relation with God, so also does the spirit of thanksgiving. To thank a benefactor simply to get more from him, is not thanksgiving, but a flattering form of petition. We thank God because we love Him, because His love of us touches us, surprises us, melts us, wins us. Indeed, so much is thanksgiving a matter of love, that we shall thank Him most of all in Heaven, when He has given us His crowning gift of the Beatific Vision,

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when He has given us all of Himself we can contain, and so there is nothing left for us to receive. Thanksgiving is, therefore, of the very essence of Catholic worship ; and as the practice of it increases our love, so does the neglect of it betoken how little love we have.

V

OH ! if we have reason to pity God, if we may dare so to speak with St. Alphonso, because men sin against His loving Majesty, still more reason have we to do so when we see how scanty and how cold are the thanksgivings offered up to Him. Nothing is so odious among men as ingratitude ; yet it is the daily and hourly portion of Almighty God. There is no telling what He has done for men ; there is no exhausting the mines of His abundant mercy, implied by each one of His titles, Creator, King, Redeemer, Father, Shepherd. He loves to be thanked, because all He wants of us is love ; and that He should please to want it is itself an infinite act of love. He had chosen to put His glory upon our gratitude ; and yet we will not give it Him !

IF we had to name any one thing which seems unaccountably to have fallen out of most men's practical religion altogether, it would be the duty of thanksgiving. It is not easy to exaggerate the common neglect of this duty. There is little enough of prayer ; but there is still less thanksgiving. For every million of *Paters* and *Aves*, which rise up from the earth to avert evils or to ask Graces, how many do you suppose follow after in thanksgiving for the evils averted or the Graces given ? Alas ! it is not hard to find the reason of this. Our own interests drive us obviously to prayer ; but it is love alone which leads to thanksgiving. A man, who only wants to avoid hell, knows that he must pray ; he has no such strong instinct impelling him to thanksgiving. It is the old story. Never did prayer come more from the heart than the piteous cry of those ten lepers who beheld Jesus entering into a town. Their desire to be heard made them courteous and considerate. They stood afar off, lest He should be angry if they with their foul disease came too near Him. Alas ! they did not truly know that dear Lord, nor how He had lowered Himself to be counted as a leper for the sons of men. They lifted up their voice saying, " Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

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When the miracle was wrought, the nine went on in selfish joy to show themselves to the priest ; but one, only one, and he an outcast Samaritan, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before our Saviour's feet, giving thanks.

vii

AMONG our personal blessings we must thank God for the continuance of health and life, whereby we can daily amass huge treasures of merits, and glorify the dear majesty of God by numerous acts of love. We must thank Him also for past and present humiliations, for calumnies, unkind interpretations of our words, unloving deeds, inconsiderate omissions, or unfriendly intentions, the detractions we have suffered from, and everything which has ever happened to mortify our self-love.

viii

THE patience and long-suffering of God should be another subject of continual thanksgiving. Is it not wonderful how He has borne with us, and we so miserably perverse the while ? What a miracle of patience God has been ! Can we not enter into the spirit of that Spanish

THANKS

lady of whom Father Rho speaks, who said, "That if she had to build a church in honour of the attributes of God, she would dedicate it to the Divine Patience?" Even the heathen Emperor Antoninus thanked God for the occasions of sin to which he had never been exposed. This, then, is another personal blessing for which we must always be giving thanks. St. Chrysostom, also, would have us remember with special gratitude the hidden and unknown blessings which God has heaped upon us. "God," he says, "is an over-running fountain of clemency, flowing upon us, and round about us, even when we know it not." In this matter Father Peter Faber was remarkable. He used to say there were hardly any blessings we ought more scrupulously to thank God for than those we never asked, and those which come to us without our knowing it. It is not unlikely, in the case of many of us, that these hidden blessings may turn out at the Last Day to have been the very hinges on which our lives turned, and that through them our Predestination has been worked out, and our Eternal Rest secured.

FIRST AND LAST PRINCIPLES

SHALL we be saved or not? The whole of life's solemnity and seriousness resolves itself into that one overwhelming doubt. We should have nothing so much at heart as this. Nay rather we should have nothing at heart but this. How dead to self we should soon become under the shadow of this universal, lifelong question! Yet how does the case really stand? A little wrong, a trifling injustice, an insulting word, a piquing of our self-love and personal vanity, stirs us more effectually and interests us more really than the chances of being lost or saved. Yet we are aiming at a devout life! Yet we dream that we are serving God!

ii

YOU must not exclude as impossible or impracticable any amount of perfection. You must have no reserve. You have nothing to do with the future. You have to follow the present Grace, and then the Grace which shall present itself next, and then the Grace after that, and so on, till God draws you to a nearness to Himself, which it would frighten you now even to picture to yourself. You must

abandon yourself to Grace and follow its lead. Undeniable as the common sense of this may be, corrupt nature will often plead eloquently against it. Consequently this theory must not be merely a loving instinct in the heart or an habitual resolution in the will. You must verify it as an intellectual conviction. You must have persuaded yourself of it. If not, when temptation comes, you will tremble from head to foot with indecision, and end by fainting. It is well, therefore, to make it a frequent subject of meditation. You must accustom yourself to true views about the Gospel. You must see that, all through, it is a religion of suffering, of mortification, of self-sacrifice, of consuming love, of self-forgetting zeal, of self-crucifying union, in a word, it is the religion of the Cross and the Crucified. You must get well into you the truth so unpalatable to nature that self-denial is of its essence, and that it must be daily self-denial, not only that we may be perfect, but even that we may be Our Dear Lord's disciples.

iii

IN truth, Jesus is our model, of Whom the Holy Ghost bade the apostle say that He pleased not Himself. Fix your eyes on this Divine Exemplar ; familiarise yourself with the mysteries of His Sacred

FIRST AND LAST PRINCIPLES

Humanity, until the spirit of them passes into you. Learn the secret of His Infancy, of His eighteen years' Hidden Life, of His three years' Ministry, of His week's passion, of His forty days of Risen Life. Where is there any self? Is it not all sacrifice in detail? Is it not all unreserved generosity for the glory of His Father and the perishing souls of men? This unreservedness is the grand characteristic of the Incarnation. Look at His Passion. Take His Divinity for the first point of your meditation on it. How did He use it! He restrained it from consoling Him; He let it strengthen Him that He might suffer more, even beyond the ordinary limits of human endurance; it was all the while actually giving physical strength and vigour to His executioners to torment Him with, and its concurrence was the weight and the force of the burning lash. Then look at His Soul. In it He foresaw His Passion all His life long, so that it was a fear and a suffering of three-and-thirty years. Gethsemani was, as it were, the Crucifixion of His Soul, as Calvary was of His Body; and all through the Passion His Soul was pierced by woes and humiliations which have never been surpassed or equalled for continuity, variety and keenness. Then cast an eye upon His Sacred Body. Nothing is held back. Head, Hands, Feet, Eyes, Mouth, Back, Heart, all have

their own torture, all contribute their own peculiar agony to the grand Redeeming Sacrifice. His Blood is shed quite wastefully, over the olive roots of Gethsemani, on the pavement of Jerusalem, into the braided thongs and the knotted lashes, all along the way of the Cross, up Calvary, and on the Holy wood of the Cross, and it is shed until the emptied Heart has not another drop to give. Now compare all this with our own mean reserve and half-heartedness ! Towards God what scanty prayers, what careless examens, what heartless confessions, what cold Communions, what human respect, what grievous sins ! Towards our neighbours, how selfish in action, how unkind in word, how censorious in thought ! Towards ourselves, how indulgent, how conceited, what pampering of our body, what inflation of our minds, what worship of our will !

iv

HOW wonderful is the dignity of those who have been ransomed by the Precious Blood of Jesus, and so sweetly justified by His victorious Resurrection ! The Heavens are not so high as is their liberty, nor the sea so deep, nor the plains of earth so wide. Poverty cannot soil it, grief cannot sadden it, death cannot end it.

FIRST AND LAST PRINCIPLES

Beyond all words that an over-full heart
can utter, blessed, thrice blessed be God,
for the freedom wherewith Christ has
made us free !

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

AND what were our beginnings like ? All day long we had a sensible heat of Divine Love in our hearts. We desired to do great things, very great things, foolishly great things, for God. We believed we should never grow tired of spiritual exercises. We were impatient to be Saints, and we undervalued the Grace of perseverance. We were continually wondering at the beauty of Jesus, and wanted to stand still and look at it, while we were wearied and fatigued by our ordinary actions and relative duties. Oh happy days ! days of power ! that passed, but left their fruits behind them !

ii

SOMETIMES we were tempted to undervalue them. But we soon saw how stupid it was to esteem lightly any of God's gifts, because some day they would hand us on to others. We knew that these first fervours were a spiritual childhood ; but nevertheless that God meant something by them. We felt that they were burning, felling, and clearing a great deal of the past, ploughing the present, and sowing for the future. We knew they would

never return, that the Saints had had them, and that they were a shelter from the world, just when its hot suns would have withered our souls and stricken them with barrenness. We were not, however, blind to the dangers of these fervours. We knew it would be dangerous to fall too much in love with sensible sweetness. We might become censorious. We might neglect the duties of our state. We might trust too much to self, and not be sufficiently dependent upon Grace. We might take rash vows, or choose a state of life, or make some great change, in a heat. We knew also that some day there would be a reaction, and we could not tell what shape it might take. Hence we made some effort, but not so much as we might have done, to mortify self-love, to be cheerful when we fell, to be frightened of ourselves, to be open with our director, not to read high books or to attempt out-of-the-way methods of prayer, to avoid singularity, not to argue about religion or to talk of spirituality, and to have a special devotion to the silence of Jesus.

iii

SO at last we left the nurse's arms and tottered about the floor, often asking to be taken back again, not seldom with our little heads broken against hard tables

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

and inconvenient chairs. Our strong good will for perfection remained, though the foresight of its difficulties was much less confused. We began to discern the difference between courage and presumption, and we saw that courage was always accompanied with a clear view and a keen sense of our own nothingness. We began to acquire some solidity in devotion, by sticking for a year or more to the acquisition of a single virtue, or the extirpation of a single fault. We became more recollected without knowing it, and without seeming so. We grew modestly timid of adopting too many practices and committing ourselves to too many vocal prayers, scapulars, confraternities, and the like. We saw the importance of gentleness, because the practice of so many other virtues is involved in it, because it is by far the most powerful interior motive-power, and because Our Lord proposes it to us in a special way. Yet in practising this gentleness, we studiously mortified natural tendernesses, perceiving that they wound the jealousy of God, and make the heart effeminate and incapable of Grace. There was a day, it was a day of revolution, when we ceased making general resolutions, and only made particular ones. We cultivated the spirit of faith; for it dawned upon us that it was a gift capable of increase by culture. We learned prayer,

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as boys learn a lesson, and never minded its being for the time actually a hot-bed of new imperfections. We were careful not to make a show of being spiritual. We began to dislike our ruling passion and instinctively to strike blows at it whenever we had the opportunity. We were tolerably patient with the slowness of our own progress, and attended to our present Grace. We became more and more reverently devoted to the Sacred Humanity ; and while somehow caring less about lights, flowers and epithets, we were conscious of a wonderfully grave and business-like confidence in Our dearest Lady. Through all this we felt great sensible sweetness almost continuously, were unconscious of much progress, were dreadfully tempted to self-trust, and were periodically liable to spiritual panics. Still the work was all right as far as it went. All it had to do now was to *wear*. This is the one question in all spiritual things, How will it wear ? Alas ! the world and the cloister ! how choked up they both are with worn-out and shabby spiritualities, and never a Jew to go round to buy them !

BUT did all this go smoothly? Did we make no mistakes after all? Oh far from smoothly, and plenty of mistakes! O so many heart-aches, doubts, panics, wearinesses, and waywardnesses! First of all we did not, though we meant it, give ourselves up unreservedly to God. We kept back some attachments that were not sinful, some things which we thought our circumstances admitted of. We struck a balance between prudence and principle, and forgot that concession and dispensation are for the latter, not the earlier stages of the spiritual life. We adopted fresh practices and strictnesses, egged on by self-love, not the simple view of God's will, and we did not remember that we ought to consult and investigate our purity of intention as much in adopting a strictness, as in asking a dispensation. We permitted ourselves in little laxities, with regard to the custody of the senses, dress, talking, bodily fatigue, health, and such matters. We gave way to discouragements, because of our faults, our increased self-knowledge, our multiplied temptations, our inability to keep our own resolutions, and the subtraction of spiritual sweetness. Then, losing our hearts in this discouragement, we presently lost our heads, and fell into all manner of scruples, from not distin-

guishing between temptation and consent, from secret tenacity of our own opinions, from an excessive fear of God's justice and a want of confidence in His mercy, from a morbid desire of avoiding semblance of sin, and from an indiscreet austerity, solitude, and sacrifice of recreation. Heart and head gone, spirits went next. We gave way to an inexplicable sadness, and were sorely tempted to change our lives, to discontinue our strictness, to talk of our sorrows, and to seek worldly consolations. Had we done any one of these four things, we might have been lost. The sadness did us a great mischief as it was ; it drove us into self-introversion. We lost sight of the grand objects of faith, and went into an excess with our examinations of conscience ; and then to extricate ourselves from this, we plunged into too many designs, and had too many irons in the fire and were inordinately disappointed when our good works did not succeed. There was altogether a want of childlike abandonment, both of our exterior plans, and of our interior conduct, into the hands of Providence. We wished to attempt to convert others before we had a right to distract ourselves from ourselves. Even perfection in the world must have a novitiate of looking after itself, as well as perfection in monasteries. However, we determined to set all right by talking very disparagingly

of ourselves, and so made the worst mistake of all and lost the few ounces of humility which we had so painfully scraped together. For it turned out in the end to be conceit which made us revile ourselves. The upshot of it all was that we allowed ourselves to be too much engrossed with the metaphysics of the spiritual life and its exclusively interior things, so as to be drawn off from a loving attention to the Sacraments, to Jesus, and to God. However, mistakes, like other things, have their day ; and we can afford now not only to glean wisdom from our blunders, but a sort of grave amusement also.

V

BUT we have not done yet. The ugliest part is still to be confessed. These mistakes only concerned ourselves. There were others which concerned our neighbours. What disedification both given and taken ! There were scandals given to others aiming at perfection, scandals taken from others aiming at it, and scandals taken by the world. How unlovely did we make the work of God appear ! We talked about religion, and so illustrated by our words the inconsistency of our practice ; and doubtless as beginners always do, we talked above our state, and from books rather than experience. We adopted

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

uncommon devotions, which looked still less inviting when exhibited together with our unhumble, unmortified, unobliging manner. We were impatient of contradiction, weary with prayer, irritable with penance, as persons accustomed to have it all their own way with their favourite spiritual books. We envied the spiritual advancement of others, took up with self-willed austerities which interfered with domestic arrangements, unnecessarily provoked the opposition of relatives, and disturbed the comfort of others. The duties of our station were performed in a precipitate, perfunctory, and ungraceful manner. We did not praise others with simplicity, because we were dissatisfied with them, and did not reflect that God's leadings are numberless, and that others may not have our light. There was a bitterness in our zeal which was shown both in words and manner, and we were often inclined to threaten men with the judgements of God. We were censorious, and given to preach and moralise ; and if we tried to avoid this fault we fell into an opposite one, and gave way too easily, when others for their own convenience wished us to suspend our strictnesses.

THE world treated us unjustly certainly. Yet we did the same in our turn to other spiritual persons. We misunderstood them when we were complaining of being misunderstood ourselves. We did not remember in their case how many faults may consist with the beginnings of real piety. We ought to have known from our own experience that they were in all probability fighting a good fight with those very faults which were offending us, or that God was leaving them without aid in those particular respects for their humiliation and trial ; and when all this ought to have been in our own minds, we sat by and allowed worldly people ill-naturedly to exaggerate these faults. At the worst we should have remembered Jesus and been sweet-mannered. At all events here we are, having learned thus much from it all, that there are two spirits which effectually hinder all advance in the spiritual life, one is the spirit of taking scandal, and the other is the fidgetty desire to give edification. For they both of them deny the five essential principles of the spiritual life, the law of charity which believes all things, the attention to self, the temper of concealment, the carelessness of men's judgements, and the practice of the presence of God. In these five ways they destroy

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the interior life by a daily noxious infusion of mixed pusillanimity and pride. Yet with all these miseries and mistakes we are not shipwrecked ; and at this particular point of our growth in holiness, we are face to face with this enemy, the human spirit, seeking about for weapons wherewith to combat it.

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

IS there not a nursery tale of some one who turned to gold whatever he touched, and was soon embarrassed by his marvellous gift ? This is our case under the Gospel, under the law of Grace. All we touch turns to gold, by intention and oblation. Yet our gift need never embarrass us. We shall never fill God with glory, nor Heaven with merits. But how, some one may say, how are we to note them, and to remember them now, as they come before us in such multitudes, and so incessantly ? I answer, " Not by any rule which can be given ; nor by any formal method which can be devised. *You must love. You must love. You must love.* There is no other way. There is no help for it. Love will teach you everything, and tell you the secrets of Jesus. Love will make things easy and sweet. Love will be a new nature to you. There is nothing you want which love will not do for you, or get for you, and nothing else but love can do it. *You must love.*"

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

ii

LOVE alone fulfils all the Commandments at once, and is the perfecting of all our duties. It is the only one which does not deny, or at least pretermitt, something in God. Fear, when exclusive, denies mercy, and familiarity weakens reverence, when the familiarity is not profoundly based on love ; whereas love settles the equalities and rights of all the attributes of God, enthrones them all, adores them all, and is nourished in exceeding gladness by them all. Love also, and alone, accomplishes union ; and while faith dawns into sight, and hope ends in everlasting contentment, love alone abides, as we said before, outliving, taking up into itself, developing, and magnifying all other Graces, consummating at least that mystical oneness with God which the Saints have named Divine Espousals.

iii

WE all of us have times when we love God more than usual, times of fervour, of closer union with Him, of momentary love of suffering, transitory flashes of things which are like the phenomena of the Saints. They neither last long enough nor come often enough to form our normal state. They are simply our best times.

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

Now we need not dwell either upon their rarity or their brevity ; but we would fain ask if even then we love God altogether without reserves. Is nothing kept back from Him ? Is our renunciation of self ample and faultless ? Have we no secret corner of our hearts where some favourite weakness lurks in the shade, and which the strong light of heavenly love has not blinded to its own interests ? I am afraid to go on with the picture, lest I should have to ask myself at last, what is left of the Christian life ? But we have seen enough to confess of our love of God, that not only is what we give very little, but that even that little is given in the most ungraceful and unlover-like of ways. Surely this is a confession not to be made by words, which are not equal to the task, but only by silent tears, while we lie prostrate before the Throne of Him whom, strange to say, we really do love most tenderly even while we slight Him !

iv

IF we are in earnest about our souls, with a quiet fidelity to those duties, practices, and devotions, which obedience sanctions to us, our love of God increases without our knowing or feeling it. It is only now and then, in certain temptations, or on great feasts, or sometimes without

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

apparent cause, that God allows us to perceive that we have really made some progress, and that we care more for Him and less for anything else but Him, than we used to do. One sign to us of this increase of love is the growing sense of our own unworthiness, and of the extreme littleness of everything we do. It becomes a pain to us that we have so little to offer to God, and that our service of Him is after all so wretched and ungenerous. The more we know Him, and the more we approach to thoughts at least a little more worthy of His blessed majesty, the more this feeling increases upon us, and, as I say, becomes a pain. It is this which drives the Saints to yearn for suffering and to pray for crosses. The common cares, the ordinary weariness of life, are not enough to satisfy them, because they do not give them room for their heroic love. They want, a vain yet loving strife, to keep pace with the generosity of Jesus. We too, in our measure, feel this pain. We want to do more for Jesus, and our own cowardice when we come to the point is a keen misery and a sensible shame to us. "Copious redemption," says the Psalmist, "there is with God"; and it is this copiousness of our redemption which at once stimulates our love, and makes it discontented with itself.

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

V

WHEN the Saints are betrothed to God, it is by operations of Grace so magnificent, by supernatural mysteries so transcendent, that the language in which they are related seems unreal and inflated ; and if such be the Espousals on earth, what will the Marriage be in Heaven ? O, who shall dare to picture the interior caresses which the soul receives from Him who loved it eternally, and chose it out of nothing in a rapture of creative love ? Who shall dare to fasten in ungainly human words the sort of inexpressible equality with God which the soul enjoys, or her unspeakable community of goods with Him ? And wherefore does He use the word spouse, but to express this glorious unity ? Marriage was made a figure of the unity of God, and a shadow of Christ's union with His Church. Its love was to supersede all other ties. It was to obliterate the father's and the mother's home from the young wife's heart. It was to ride conqueror over the fond mother's idolatry for her first-born. Yet all this is the faintest of shadows, the feeblest of figures, to set forth the union of the soul with God ! How shall we love Him as we ought ? Rather the question should be, Can we love Him at all with anything worthy of the name of love ? May we even

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

try to love Him who has loved us with such an overwhelming love ? Must not our only love be speechless fear ? No ! for it is the law of all creation, the beautiful, benignant law, the unexpected, the incredible commandment—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul, with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength !*

vi

WHAT makes you happy makes Our dearest Lord happy also ; and the thought of this again makes us so happy that we can hardly contain ourselves, and then that again makes Him happier still. Thus religion grows sweeter and sweeter. Life is one long joy, because the Will of God is always being done in it, and the glory of God always being got from it. You become identified with the interests of Jesus ; you wed them as if they were your own, as indeed they are. His Spirit steals into you, and sets up a little throne in your heart, and crowns itself, and then most sweetly proclaims itself king. So it all goes on ; and so you live ; yet not you, but Christ lives in you ; and so you die. You never suspect you are a Saint, or anything approaching one. Your life is hid with Christ in God, and hid from no one more than from yourself. You a Saint

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE !

indeed ! Your humility would either laugh, or be frightened, at the bare thought. But O the depth of the mercies of Jesus ! What will be your surprise at His judgement seat, to hear the sweet sentence, to see the bright crown. You will almost argue against your own salvation. Our Lord makes the elect do so in the Gospel : “ Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, and fed Thee ? When saw we Thee thirsty, and gave Thee drink ? ” They cannot make it out. In all their love for Jesus, they never dreamed it was so great a thing as this.

vii

ONLY serve Jesus out of love ! Only serve Jesus out of love, and while your eyes are yet unclosed, before the whiteness of death is yet settled on your face, or those around you are sure that that last gentle breathing was indeed your last, what an unspeakable surprise will you have had at the judgement-seat of your dearest Love, while the songs of Heaven are breaking on your ears, and the glory of God is dawning on your eyes, to fade away no more for ever !

THE RIGHT TIME.

THE French statesman's maxim, "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow," admirable as it is for the prudent discharge of worldly duties, can seldom be safely practised in the spiritual life. Neither would anything but confusion come of Lord Nelson's opposite rule, that a man should always be a quarter of an hour before his time. The great thing is to do each duty as it comes, quietly, perseveringly, and with our eyes fixed on God. Without our having any set rule to observe, daily life has a tendency to settle itself into a groove, and thus each duty has a time which may be called its right time; and by observing this we shall avoid, on the one hand, being pressed by an accumulation of duties in arrear, and on the other being dissipated by having gaps of time not filled up. An unoccupied man can neither be a happy man nor a spiritual man.

WE must also be upon our guard against a habit, which is far from uncommon, of being always about to begin some occupation, and yet not beginning it. This wears and wastes our moral strength and causes us to fritter our lives away in sections, being idle to-day because we have something in view to-morrow, which cannot be begun until to-morrow. The same dissipating result will be produced, if we burden ourselves with too many vocal prayers and external observances of devotion. We shall always be in a hurry, and under a sense of pressure, which will soon lead to disgust and low spirits.

OF SADNESS

IT is no uncommon thing for spiritual persons to speak of sadness as if it were some dignified interior trial, or as if it were something to call out pure sympathy, kindness and commiseration. Whereas in by far the greater number of instances it is true to say that no state of the spiritual life represents so much venial sin and unworthy imperfection as this very sadness. It is not humility, for it makes us querulous rather than patient. It is not repentance, for it is rather vexation with self than sorrow for the offence against God. The soul of sadness is self-love. We are sad because we are weary of well-doing and of strict living. The great secret of our cheerfulness was our anxiety and diligence to avoid venial sins, and our ingenious industry to root them out. We have now become negligent on that very point, and therefore we are sad. If indeed we still try, as much as we did before, to avoid actual venial sins, we have lost the courage to keep ourselves away from many pleasant times and places which we know to be to us occasions of venial sin. We content ourselves with an indistinct self-confidence that we shall not

fall ; and at once the light of God's countenance becomes indistinct also, and the fountain of inward joy ceases to flow. We desire to be praised, and are unhappy if no notice is taken of what we do. We seek publicity as something which will console, rest, and satisfy us. We want those we love to know what we are feeling and suffering, or what we are doing and planning. The world is our sunbeam, and we come out to bask in it. What wonder we are sad ? In a word, who ever found any spiritual sadness in men trying to be good, which did not come either from a want of humility, or from habitually acting without distinct reference to God ?

It seems a strong thing to say, but it is in reality no exaggeration, that spiritual sadness is a tendency towards the state of Cain and Judas. The impenitence of both took root in a sadness, which came out of a want of humility, and that want was itself the fruit of acting with a view of self rather than a view to God.

RECONCILIATIONS

OHAPPY we! for what does it all come to? That now if we be only truly penitent, our past sins are motives for God to love us more; and for us they are the fuel with which love lights her happy cheerful fire. How beautiful is the merciful Gospel! I do not say we are to be without fear of being judged. But fear may be a happy fear, like a child's fear, and the greater I feel the weight of my passions, the more utterly and confidentially must I lean on Jesus my Saviour. My dear Brethren, I can hardly understand what it is not to believe. I see no difficulty in the Most Holy Trinity. I exult in it. As to the Incarnation, I walk up and down in it, as a spacious garden of beautiful trees and golden sunshine, with the fragrance of flowers and song of birds. The Blessed Sacrament looks to me as plain as a clear cloudless sky in June. If I could be an infidel it would be when I had looked over the vast boundless ocean of the patient tenderness of God; what I find it more hard to believe is, that being the beast and devil which I know myself to be, I should see my God at all hours, with a smile of love and a readiness of mercy, unspeakably,

RECONCILIATIONS

unchangeably a Father, a Friend, a Brother,
O more ! almost a Servant, whose delight
in my worthless soul I can neither exhaust
nor understand.

THE EXAGGERATIONS OF FEAR

THERE is perhaps hardly a passion which exercises a more tyrannical sway over the soul than fear, or any mental impression more closely connected with physical pain. It comes over us like a spirit from without, leaping upon us from some unsuspected cavern we know not where nor how. We cannot prepare for its coming, for we know not when to expect it. We cannot resist it when it comes ; for its touch is possession, and its mere advent is already victory. It brings a shadow over skies where there are no clouds, and turns the very sunshine into beams of frost. It breathes through us like a wind, searching everywhere, and chilling our most vital faculties. It goes near to paralysing our powers of action, so that we are like men who can see and hear, without being able either to speak or move. If it were not eminently a transient passion, ever flowing by the law of its own restlessness, we should lose first of all the freedom of our will, and then the light of our reason. Meanwhile its presence in the soul is accompanied, one while by a disquietude which is worse than suffering, and the continuance of which it seems to us would

THE EXAGGERATIONS OF FEAR

be incompatible with life, and then another while by a sharpness of anguish which is always on the very point of being literally unendurable. It is not pain, it is torture. How seldom have we ever found the reality of an evil so insufferable, as the terrified expectation which preceded it. Earth does not grow a sorrow, human justice has not devised a punishment, of which this is not true.

REST

THERE is a source of rest of which it is hard to speak, because words cannot tell it. They only stand for signs, which give some idea of it. It is the rest which comes from the bare thought of God, or rather which is itself the bare thought of God. Sometimes, in a beautiful climate, we come upon a scene, which, by its surpassing beauty so satisfies mind, heart, and senses, that we sit entranced, taking it in without understanding it, and resting in the simple enjoyment of the sight. Thus for awhile man may sit amid the folds of Etna, beneath a shady tree, on the marvellous mountain-shelf of Taormina and look out upon the scene. Everything that wood and water, rock and mountain, dazzling sky and translucent air can do, with the grand spirit of old history brooding over all, is there. It cannot be analysed or explained. We are taken into the nets of a beauty which masters us ; and the sheer thought of it is a joy without thought for hours.

REST

ii

THIS is a poor way of typifying the rest which is in the glorious, over-shadowing thought of God. It is a self-sufficing rest, not only because He is Almighty, All-holy, and All-wise, nor because He is our own near and Fatherly God, but simply and sheerly because He is God. Words will make it no clearer. God gives it to us sometimes and we know it; and seen through it, brighter than Sicilian air, more limpid than Arethusa's fountain, our struggle and fatigue look fair and delectable in that heavenly medium. But in whatever measure God visits us with this sort of light, true it is that such is the normal state of our spiritual life,—struggle and fatigue, and not only after these but also during these, there remaineth a sabbath for the people of God: for they rest in the languors of love here, till their rest deepens into His eternal bosom hereafter.

THE NUNC DIMITTIS

IN the silence of the temple, Simeon sings his *Nunc Dimittis*, even as Zachary sang his *Benedictus*, and Mary her *Magnificat*. Age after age shall take up the strain. All the poetry of Christian weariness is in it. It gives a voice to the heavenly detachment and unworldliness of countless Saints. It is the hearts' evening light, after the working hours of the day, to millions and millions of believers. The very last compline that the Church shall sing before the midnight when the doom begins and the Lord breaks out upon the darkness from the refulgent east, shall overflow with the melodious sweetness of Simeon's pathetic song. Joseph was wrapt even then in an ecstasy of holy admiration. Even Mary "wondered" at the words, so deep, so beautiful, so true ; for she knew, as no others knew, how marvellously her Babe was of a truth the light of all the world.

FOR OUR COMFORT

WE have often need here to remember for our comfort, that, if steps are irretrievable, nothing in the spiritual life is irremediable. Who could believe the opposite doctrine, and then live? It is fearful the power which men have to tie their fellow-men up from God. What an exercise it is for a hot temper, with a keen sense of injustice, and an honest heartiness of love for God and souls, to have to work for souls under the pressure of the great public system, organisations, and institutions, of a country which has not the faith ! To watch a soul perilously balancing on the brink of the grand eternal question, and to see plainly that the most ordinary fairness or the cheapest kindness would save it, and not be able to command either—it is a work of knives in one's flesh, smarting unbearably. We have no right to demand the fairness ; indeed the fairness is perhaps only visible from our own point of view. We are more likely to get justice, if we ask for it under the title of privilege and by the name of kindness. For the sake of Christ's poor let us insist upon God's multiplying and prolonging our patience ! Thus, all the world over,—in all classes,

FOR OUR COMFORT

especially the upper classes, creation is tied up as it were from God, and His goodness has not fair play with it, unless He will break His own laws, and throw Himself simply on His omnipotence. There is a tyranny of circumstances, which does not seem far short of a necessity of sin. It needs a definition of the faith to assure us that such a necessity is happily an impossibility. We feel all this. It cuts us to the quick. Now it depresses, now it provokes, accordingly as it acts on the inequalities of our little Grace.

FRIENDS OF SINNERS

THERE is in truth a sort of reverence due to sinners, when we look at them not as in their sins, but simply as having sinned, and being the objects of a Divine yearning. It is the manifestation of this feeling in apostolic men which lures sinners to them, and so leads to their conversion. The devotedness of Our Blessed Lord to sinners transfers a peculiar feeling to the hearts of His servants. And when the offenders come to repent, the mark of Divine predilection in the great Grace they are receiving is a thing more to admire and revere and love, than the sin is a thing to hate in connection with the sinner. In all reformatory institutions it is the want of a supernatural respect for sinners which is the cause of failure, the abundance of it which is the cause of success. When Our Lord strove to convert, it was always by kind looks, by loving words, by an indulgence which appeared to border upon laxity. He did not convert by rebuking. He rebuked Herod and the Pharisees, just because He did not vouchsafe to try to convert them. Because He let them alone, therefore He spoke sharply to them. It is always the

FRIENDS OF SINNERS

contemplative Saints who have loved sinners best, even more than the active Saints who were wearing out their lives to convert them. Is this the reason why the contemplative element is an essential ingredient in a complete apostle?

FOR THE 25TH OF MARCH

TIME was, in ages of faith, when the land would not have lain silent, as it lies now, on the eve of the twenty-fifth of March. The sweet religious music of countless bells would be ushering in the vespers of the glorious feast of the Incarnation. From the east, from central Rome, as the day declined, the news of the great feast would come, from cities and from villages, from Alpine slope, and blue sea-bay, over the leafless forests, and the unthawed snow-drifts on the fallow uplands of France. The cold waves would crest themselves with bright foam as the peal rang out over the narrow channel: and, if it were in Paschal-time, it would double men's Easter joys, and if it were in Lent, it would be a very foretaste of Easter. One moment, and the first English bell would not yet have sounded; and then Calais would have told the news to Dover, and church and chantry would have passed the note on quickly to the old Saxon mother-church of Canterbury. Thence, like a storm of music, would the news of that old eternal decree of God, out of which all creation came, have passed over the Christian island. The saints "in their beds" would rejoice to hear, Augustine,

Wilfrid, and Thomas where they lie at Canterbury, Edward at Westminster, our chivalrous protomartyr where he keeps ward amidst his flowery meads in his grand long Abbey at St. Albans, Osmund at Salisbury, Thomas at Hereford, Richard the Wonderful at Chichester, John at Beverley, a whole choir of Saints with gentle St. William at York, onward to the glorious Cuthbert, sleeping undisturbed in his pontifical pomp beneath his abbey fortress on the seven hills of Durham.

ii

WITH the cold evening wind the vast accord of jubilant towers would spread over the weald of Kent, amid its moss-grown oaks and waving mistletoe. The low humble churches of Sussex would pass it on, as day declined, to Salisbury, and Exeter, and St. Michael's fief of Cornwall. It would run like lightning up the Thames, until the many-steeped London with its dense groves of city churches, whose spires stand thick as the shipmasts in the docks, would be alive with the joyous clangour of its airy peals, steadied as it were by the deep bass of the great national bell in the tower of Old St. Paul's. Many a stately shrine in Suffolk and Norfolk would prolong the strain, until it broke from the seaboard into all the inland counties, sprinkled

FOR THE 25TH OF MARCH

with monasteries, and proud parish churches fit to be the cathedrals of bishops elsewhere, while up the Thames by Windsor, and Reading Abbey, and the grey spires of Abingdon, Oxford with its hundred bells would send forth its voice over wold and marsh to Gloucester, Worcester, and even down to Warwick and to Shrewsbury, and its southern sound would mingle with the strain that came across from Canterbury, amid the Tudor churches of the orchard-loving Somerset, at the foot of Glastonbury's legendary fane, and on the quays of Bristol, whose princely merchants abjured the slave-trade at the preaching of St. Wulstan. In the heart of the great fen, where the moon through the mist makes a fairyland of the willows and the marsh-plants, of the stagnant dikes and the peat embankments and the straight white roads, the bells of the royal sanctuary of Ely would ring out merrily, sounding far off or sounding near as the volumes of the dense night-mist closed or parted, cheating the traveller's ear. A hundred lichen-spotted abbeys in those watery lowlands would take up the strain, while great St. Mary's, like a precentor, would lead the silvery peals of venerable Cambridge, low-lying among its beautiful-gardens by the waters of its meadow-stream. Lincoln from its steep capitol would make many a mile of quaking moss

and black-watered fen thrill with the booming of its bells.

iii

MONASTIC Yorkshire that beautiful kingdom of the Cistercians, would scatter its waves of melodious sound over the Tees into Durham and Northumberland, northward along the conventual shores of the grey North Sea, and westward over the heath-covered fells and by the brown rivers into Lancashire, and Westmoreland, and Cumberland, whose mountain-echoes would answer from blue lakes, and sullen tarns, and the crags where the raven dwells, and the ferny hollows where the red-deer crouches, to the bells of Carlisle, St. Bees, and Furness. Before the cold white moon of March has got the better of the lingering daylight, the island, which seemed to rock on its granite anchors far down within the ocean, as if it tingled with the pulses of deep sound, will have heard the last responses dying muffled in the dusky Cheviots, or in the recesses of gigantic Snowdon, and by the solitary lakes of St. David's land, or trembling out to sea to cheer the mariner as he draws nigh the shore of the Island of the Saints. Everywhere are the pulses of the bells beating in the hearts of men. Everywhere are their hearths happier. Everywhere, over hill

FOR THE 25TH OF MARCH

and dale, in the street of the town, and by the edge of the fen, and in the rural chapels on the skirts of the hunting-chase, the Precious Blood is being outpoured on penitent souls, and the fires of faith burn brightly and holiest prayers arise ; while the angels, from the southern mouths of the Arun and the Adur to the banks of the brawling Tweed and the sands of the foaming Solway, hear only, from the heart of a whole nation, and from the choirs of countless churches, and from thousands of reeling belfries, one prolonged *Magnificat*.

THE HOLY DEAD

THERE have always been two views of Purgatory prevailing in the Church, not contradictory the one of the other, but rather expressive of the mind and devotion of those who have embraced them. One is the view met with in by far the greater number of the lives and revelations of Italian and Spanish Saints, the works of the Germans of the Middle Ages, and the popular delineations of purgatory in Belgium, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico and elsewhere. The other is the view which has been made popular by St. Francis of Sales, though he drew it originally from his favourite treatise on purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa, and it is also borne out by many of the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampe-luna, a Teresian nun, published with a long and able censure by Fra Giuseppe Bonaventura Ponze, a Dominican professor at Saragossa. Each of these two views, though neither denies the other, has its own peculiar spirit of devotion. The first view is embodied in the terrifying sermon of Italian Quaresimali, and in those wayside pictures which so often provoke the fastidiousness of the English traveller.

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Violence, confusion, wailing, horror preside over its descriptions. Then to this terrible-ness of the pain of sense is added the dreadfulness of the pain of loss. The beauty of God remains in itself the same immensely desirable object it ever was. But the soul is changed. All that in life and in the world of sense dulled its desires after God is gone from it, so that it seeks Him with an impetuosity which no imagination can at all conceive. The very burning excess of its love becomes the measure of its intolerable pain. To these horrors we might add many more which depict purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal.

ii

THE second view of Purgatory does not deny any one of the features of the preceding view, but it almost puts them out of sight by the other considerations which it brings more prominently forward. It goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquillised, by the face of Jesus, its first sight of the Sacred Humanity at the Particular Judgement which it has undergone. That Vision abides with it still, and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seem to fall from our Saviour's loving eyes. In the sea of fire

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it holds fast by that image. The moment that in His sight it perceives its own unfitness for Heaven, it wings its voluntary flight to Purgatory, like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need no Angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God.

iii

IN that moment the soul loves God most tenderly, and in return is most tenderly beloved by Him. To the eyes of those who take this view, that soul seems most beautiful. How should a dear spouse of God be anything but beautiful? The soul is in punishment, true; but it is in unbroken union with God. "It has no remembrance," says St. Catherine of Genoa, most positively, "no remembrance at all of its past sins or of earth." Its sweet prison, its holy sepulchre, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father, and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment and the most unutterable love. As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear, or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable; and there was a time on earth when that gift alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot

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commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least degree displease God. It loves God above everything, and it loves Him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by Angels, and cannot but rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. Nay, its very bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound unshaken peace, such as the language of this world has no words to tell.

iv

SAINTE CATHERINE says : " If a soul, having still something left to be cleansed away, were presented to the Vision of God, it would consider itself grievously injured, and its suffering would be worse than that of ten purgatories ; for it would be quite unable to endure that excessive goodness and that exquisite justice." Hence it is that the suffering soul is entirely resigned to the will of its Creator. It loves its very pains, and rejoices in them, because they are a holy ordinance of God. Thus in the midst of the ardent heats it enjoys a contentment so complete, that it exceeds the grasp of human intelligence to comprehend it. " I do not believe," says the Saint, " that it is possible to find a contentment to compare with that of the

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souls in Purgatory, unless it be the contentment of the Saints in Paradise. This contentment increases daily through the influx of God into those souls, and this influx increases in proportion as the impediment is consumed and worn away. Indeed, so far as the will is concerned, we can hardly say that the pains are pains at all, so contentedly do the souls rest in the ordinance of God, to whose will pure love unites them." *

V

THERE are revelations, too, which tell of multitudes who are in no local prison, but abide their purification in the air, or by their graves, or near altars where the Blessed Sacrament is, or in the rooms of those who pray for them, or amid the

* The same view of purgatory as that taken by St. Catherine is very briefly but touchingly embodied by Dante in that beautiful scene where he and Virgil are wandering on the outskirts of purgatory. The poet is dazzled all at once by the bright light of an Angel coming across the sea, and impelling a bark filled with new souls for purgatory; and he describes the boat as driving towards the shore so lightly, that it drew no wake upon the water, while the souls that had left life, and earth, and judgement but a few minutes since, pensively yet cheerily sang, "*In exitu Israel de Egypto.*" Surely it was a beautiful thought of his; and as he was a theologian as well as a poet, it seems to deserve mention here, as a proof of the view of purgatory which recommended itself to intellectual men in Dante's day.

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scenes of their former vanity and frivolity. If silent suffering, sweetly, gracefully endured, is a thing so venerable on earth, what must this region of the Church be like? Compared with earth, its trials, doubts, exciting and depressing risks, how much more beautiful, how much more desirable, that still, calm, patient realm over which Mary is crowned as queen, and Michael is the perpetual ambassador of her mercy. The spirit of this view is love, an extreme desire that God should not be offended, a yearning for the interests of Jesus. It takes its tone from the soul's first voluntary flight into that heritage of suffering. It looks at things from God's point of view, and merges its own interests in His. It is just the view we might expect to come from St. Francis of Sales, or the loving St. Catherine of Genoa. It is the helplessness rather than the wretchedness of the souls detained there, which moves those who take this view to compassion and devotion; but it is God's glory and the interests of Jesus, which influence them most of all.

vi

HOW solemn and subduing is the thought of that holy kingdom, that realm of pain. There is no cry, no murmur; all is silent, silent as Jesus before His enemies. We shall never know how we really love

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Mary, till we look up to her out of those deeps, those vales of dread mysterious fire. Beautiful region of the Church of God ! Lovely troop of the flock of Mary ! What a scene is presented to our eyes when we gaze upon that consecrated empire of sinlessness, and yet of keenest suffering ! There is the beauty of those immaculate souls, and then the loveliness, yea, the worshipfulness of their patience, the majesty of their gifts, the dignity of their solemn and chaste sufferings, the eloquence of their silence ; the moonlight of Mary's throne lighting up their land of pain and unspeechful expectation ; the silver-winged Angels voyaging through the deeps of that mysterious realm ; and above all, that unseen Face of Jesus, which is so well remembered that it seems to be almost seen ! What a sinless purity of worship is here in this liturgy of hallowed pain ! O world, O weary, clamorous, sinful world ! who would not break away if he could, like an uncaged dove, from thy perilous toils and unsafe pilgrimage, and fly with joy to the lowest place in that most pure, most safe, most holy land of suffering and of sinless love ?

THE END

WHAT a wonderful permission to us is the permission to love God ! What then shall we say, when we consider that we ourselves are to be admitted to the sight and enjoyment of this life of God ? It is the very end for which we were created. Nay more, we ourselves have been in some sense part of that Divine life. We have been known and loved, up in those regions of eternity, in those boundless tracts of uncreated being, before the birth of time ; and it is our very destination to enter into the joy of that exulting life, to see God as He is, and to live in endless companionship with Him. It is our incredible bliss to be allowed to add one spark more to the glory, the outward glory, of that blessed majesty. We are large enough to catch the light of His justice, and be another place for it to shine upon. His mercy can beautifully reflect itself even in the shallows of our tiny soul. We can lie upon the shore of that exulting life, and shine and glow and murmur while its bright waters wash over us for ever. O beautiful destiny of men ! how happy is our present, our future how much happier ! How happy is our worship, how happy even the very fear with which we work out a salvation so magnificent and so Divine !

ST. FRANCIS of Sales says that the best and most successful beggars are those who are the most deformed, and have the most frightful sores ; they attract alms : so is it with us when we lie before the door of God's compassion : so that our very wretchedness is our treasure to trade with in the things of God. Our misery seems positively to widen the immensity of His mercy. O happy soul—it would be bewildered were it not immortal—the music of Heaven sounds louder, and the choirs of the angels wax stronger, while the new Saint is set upon his throne, and crowned by God with the crown which he won in the dark streets and dull traffic of London, but which his Heavenly Father had prepared for him before the world began. O happy, happy soul, happy beyond all words, happy now for evermore. Thou wilt think of us to-night, and thy thoughts of us will be blessings and graces in the morning. We too love Jesus, we too prize our faith, we too will fight our fight—and then our turn will come at last, our entry into Heaven, our marvellous coronation, our first sight of the Ever-blessed God, the beginning—O who can think of it without trembling with nervous delight?—the beginning of our beautiful eternity.

A RESOLUTION

FOR the love of Jesus, do something !
I wonder what would take place if a few of us were to say resolutely, "I am determined to have God better loved in the world. I will not come into the world for nothing. Somebody shall love God the more for my having been created. If it be ever so little, Divine love shall have been increased in the world by me." Have we ever made such a determination ? Let us make it now. I have huge faith in it. When do we begin ? To-day. Very well. Now we have a definite work before us, a work which shall be done. By the Heart of Jesus, we will do something great and generous for Thee !

Kind Reader, may God give you Grace to forget all that may be theory of mine, and to remember only the wisdom and the practice of His Saints !



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